

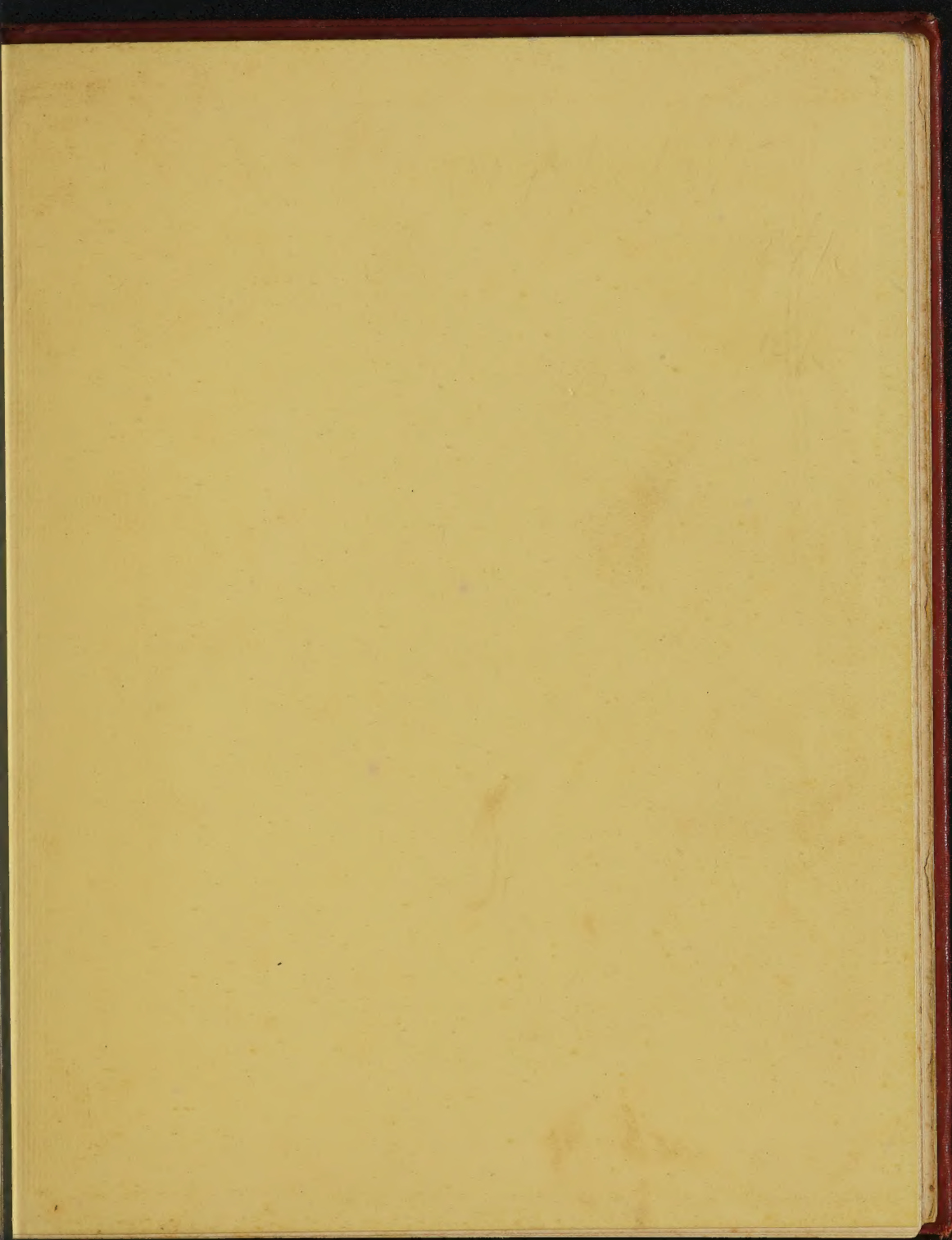


I'LL TRY

HOW THE FARMER'S BOY
BECAME A CAPTAIN



Charles Hilton
A Present From the
Wesleyan Sunday School
Wigzell May 1892



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[See page 16.]

'I'LL TRY;

OR,

HOW THE FARMER'S SON BECAME
A CAPTAIN.

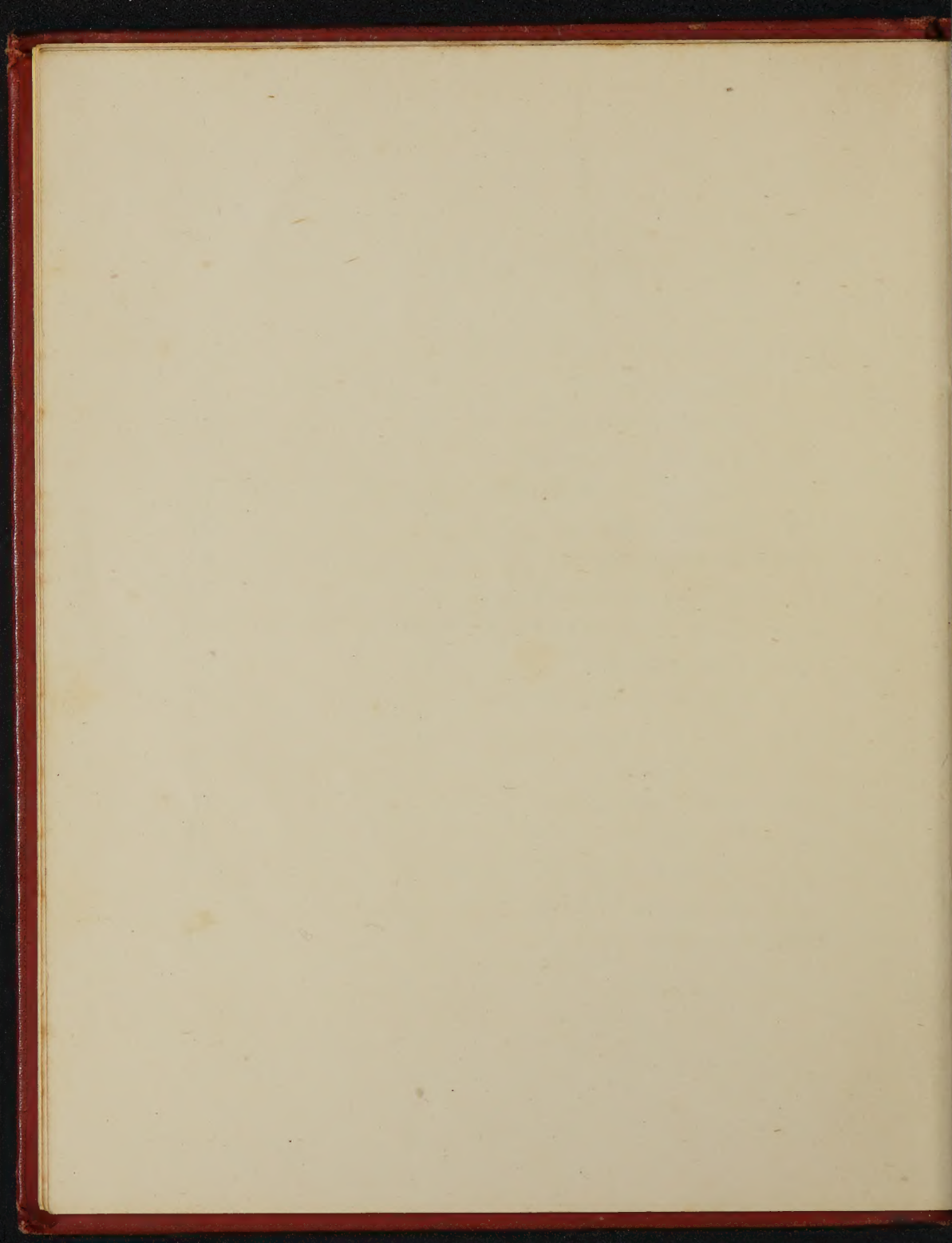


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'I'LL TRY.'

CHAPTER I.

WILLIE'S HOME.

'FATHER, I am so glad this is my birthday, and not to-morrow, aren't you?'

'Yes, Willie, especially as it will be the last we shall spend together at the old Grange.'

'Never mind that, father; I hope we shall be together on a great many more of my birthdays; if not here, in some cosy cottage until I can buy a house.'

'Don't be too sanguine, Willie. You will have a long time to wait and work before you can buy a house. Do not expect too much, my boy. Life is full of disappointments.'

'Now, father, I won't be wrapped up in the wet blanket. I will expect a great deal, and I will do a great deal. If I have my health and strength, why, by the time I am twenty-one I shall be fit to be chief-mate—and that will be in seven years, as soon as my apprenticeship is over. Then who knows but in a year I may become master? and then—'

'And then, my boy? Are you not, think you, something like the milkmaid in your spelling-book—reckoning your chicks, eh? You know the rest.'

'Ay, father, I do. Only I won't be quite so silly as to throw over all my milk, which I take to be neglecting my learning. I intend to study, as well as work with my hands; because, if I don't, I shall be a man before the mast all my life.'

'Willie, I am afraid you are ambitious.'

'Of course I am, father; and I may thank you and mother for it.'

'Nay, my lad, that is going too far.'

'Not a bit of it! Did not you and mother keep me from running about, and from making companions of boys that would have done me no good?'

'We did that, Willie, because we wish you to grow up a truthful, honest, God-fearing youth.'

'Which I hope I shall be, father, thanks to you and mother; but being truthful and honest will help me to rise, if I only use the right means, which I intend to do. I shall try to be a smart sailor and a good navigator, which, I suppose, are two of the requisites to make a good master.'

'Ay; but a master has need of something more. He must be able to command.'

'Well, I will learn to control myself; then I shall soon learn to control others.'

'Well, Willie, I only say don't expect too much.'

'Father, I shall expect everything that a sailor can attain, and—'

What more Willie would have said is not known, for just then Mrs. Jacques came into the room to tell her husband that the goose was ready for him to carve. So he got up immediately, and went into the kitchen, followed by Willie, who liked to see his father cut up a goose. Mr. Jacques was considered an excellent carver, and he had his own notion of



The Old Farm-house.

carving a goose, which was to do it in a large dripping-pan, putting all the pieces in methodical order, and then pouring over them a rich gravy. The pan was then put into the oven, to make the goose thoroughly hot. When this was accomplished, it was transferred to a large dish, and placed on the dining-table. Farmer Jacques had a weakness for roast goose, and every year had a certain number fed for home consumption. It was an invariable dish on Christmas-day, and on Willie's birthday, the thirty-first of January.

When the trio were seated at the dinner-table, Willie, who could not for a second forget that on the morrow he should go away, said—

“Mother, is it not funny that my ship's name is the same as yours, ‘Sarah’—the bonny ‘Sarah’? I cannot forget you.”

Mrs. Jacques put down her knife and fork, and covered her face with her apron.

“Now, mother,” pleaded Willie, with his arms lovingly round her neck, “you must not cry, or I cannot eat my dinner.”

“Do not mind me, my boy; go back to your chair.”

“Not unless you will dry your tears, and promise to eat.”

“I will; now go, or the goose will be cold.”

Willie returned to his seat. But even he had not his usual appetite, and he failed to do justice to the good cheer before him. He refused even the plum-pudding to the dismay of his mother; who, however, secretly determined to put it into a jar, and pack it in his sea-chest, with other good things that she had prepared for her boy. He was to leave for the seaport on the following morning, at four o'clock, in order to get there before night; for the journey was long, and in those days there were no railways.

Newton Grange, the home of Farmer Jacques, was situated about a quarter of a mile from the river Derwent, and about an equal distance from the village of Newton. It was an old, gabled, stone edifice, with thatched roof, and small diamond-paned windows, surrounded by ivy, two sides of the Grange being one mass of green. The thatch was dotted with tufts of house-leek and stonecrop. A stone wall enclosed the garden, the top of which was covered with club-moss and stonecrop. It was a picturesque old place, and strangers often stood to admire it; and could they have gone inside, they would have found old-fashioned comfort and real hospitality.

The Grange had been in the Jacques family for more than two hundred years, but in a few weeks it would be their home no longer. Heavy losses, arising from various causes, had compelled the present occupant, the father of Willie, to give notice to leave the home of his ancestors. It nearly broke his heart, but there was no help for it. So he took a small place a few miles distant, and thither he would remove his family on Lady-day. Mrs. Jacques had to hide her own grief in order to support her husband, and he would sometimes tax her with being indifferent, when all the time she felt that no other house could become home to her in the same way the dear old Grange had been. She had gone thither a youthful bride; there her boy had been born, and there had been spent the best and, perhaps, the happiest years of her life. Leaving the Grange would be like losing a dear friend, but, mindful of her husband, she would not show her grief. Willie, their only child, a fine high-spirited boy of fourteen, had, after much coaxing, obtained his parents' consent to go to sea. He had chosen the Greenland trade, because he had known an old sailor who had been in that

service, and who had told him marvellous stories of the ice-bergs, bears, and Esquimaux, until Willie imagined that no cities or foreign countries could compete in interest with the Arctic regions. His mother gently tried to dissuade him, but his mind was fixed. So she ceased her pleadings, hid her fears of the unknown dangers that would surround her darling, and set about preparing his outfit. Had they been going to remain at the Grange, it would have been different. But the poor cottage was no place for Willie. Even Mrs. Jacques acknowledged to herself that she should not like to see her boy a cowherd, and Willie would make his way, of that she was sure.

The last evening was a sad one. Willie did his best to be cheerful, but his gaiety was assumed. He was far too loving not to feel acutely this first separation from home ties. The farmer scarcely spoke a word; while Mrs. Jacques tried to busy herself in needless preparations,—needless, because all was packed, everything ready for the morrow. At last the farmer roused himself from his musings, and turning to Willie with almost stern abruptness, caused by intensity of feeling, thus addressed him :

‘Willie, you are going out into a world where you will see and hear much evil. You take with you good principles, but it remains to be proved whether you will retain them, and be guided by them during your future life. Remember that on yourself depends your future well-being. I will not ask you to make me any promise; I don’t like promises; but I should wish you to avoid three things.’ The farmer here paused, and looked earnestly at his boy.

‘What are they, father?’

‘I do not wish you to learn to smoke, to drink, or to swear. If you are tempted to one, or all of these, think of

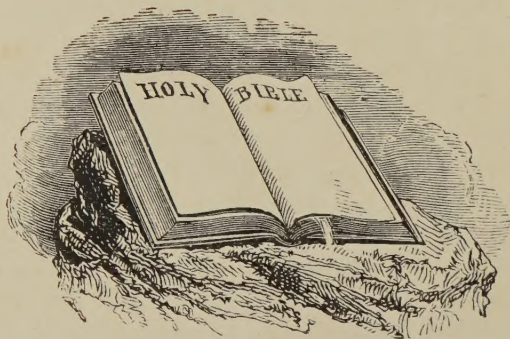
your name; think of your mother, boy; but, above all, think that God sees you. And do not do the less, lest you also do the greater evil. You told me a little while back that you would rise; be equally determined to keep a pure heart and an upright mind.'

'Father, I'll try to act so that you shall have no cause to be ashamed of your boy.'

'You know where to seek for help, Willie?'

'Yes, father,' said Willie; 'mother has packed up the Chart, I know,' looking affectionately at his mother, whom he had seen carefully folding in clean white paper a new Bible that she had bought for this birthday-present. She had also given him a little red morocco-bound book that she had had ever since she was his age, called 'Daily Bread,' containing a verse of Scripture for every day. He knew she wished him to read the verse every day, and he intended to do it; but he did not tell her so. His mother trusted him quite as much, and perchance more than if he had made her many promises. He had always been truthful and obedient, and he would not fail her now that he was going from her. The seed sown in his young heart, she felt confident, would bear fruit. Had she not the promise, 'Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it'? And she and his father *had* tried to train him in the fear and love of God. They had endeavoured to implant in his mind sound principles, and their daily petition was that God would keep him in the path of virtue. Her boy was going from her, but he was not going out of God's presence; he would still be under the Father's care. It was needful that his principles should be tested by trial, or how would they be proved to be true?—needful that he should go out into the world, or how could he learn to acquit himself as a man? Still, her mother's

heart quailed at the dreaded separation. She tried to lay her fears to rest by repeating to herself the manifold promises in the Word of Life. Yet, notwithstanding her efforts, fain would she have kept her boy with her, could she have done so without cause for after-regret and injury to his future welfare.



CHAPTER II.

ON THE ROAD.

THE morning of the thirty-first of January was bleak and stormy. A driving sleet made the quiet old horse, that was yoked in the cart to take Willie and his father to meet the stage-coach, toss his head and snort with discomfort. The farmer buttoned his great-coat close, to keep out the damp; and Mrs. Jacques wrapped a thick woollen comforter round Willie's neck, which he would fain have gone without, as he wanted to begin to be hardy. But to resist would grieve his good mother; so he let her bundle him up to her heart's content, secretly resolving that when he reached L— he would not take such care of himself. But all thought was put to flight by the agony of parting. This was his first separation from his mother; and in spite of his best endeavours to be brave, his tears would come, when he thought his mother's arms were about his neck and her kisses on his lips for the last time for so long. And when she whispered, 'Don't forget that one Eye is always upon you, Willie,' his voice was too choked to reply.

'Come, Willie, we shall miss the coach unless we make haste, and it will be bad travelling through the snow and sleet.'

'Yes, father, I am ready;' and Willie, breaking from his mother's encircling arms, jumped into the cart beside his

father, his substantial oak chest making a capital seat for both.

His thoughtful mother had spread on the top a thick woollen rug, and given them another to cover their feet, that they might not suffer from the severity of the weather. The farmer attempted to laugh and make a joke, saying,—

'You must think us a pair of babies to be coddled in this way, and not a sturdy old farmer who has faced all weathers for nigh fifty years, and a strapping youth who feels himself equal to face a Greenland bear.' But ere he had finished speaking the cheerfulness had gone, and he ceased abruptly, lest he should, in truth, make a baby of himself. So stealthily drawing his coat-sleeve across his eyes, he turned to give some superfluous direction to the man about letting the horse have a rest and a feed of corn before he returned.

At length the cart drove off into the darkness; which seemed typical of Willie's unknown future. He was about to enter on a new, untried life, with the hope and energy of a bright young spirit that knew little of the world beyond the home-circle, and had seen less. How would he pass through the trial in which so many had failed?

After a cold drive of two hours, they reached the wayside inn at which the coach stopped to pick up passengers, just without the market-town where it changed horses. The farmer and Willie took their seats by the driver,—a tall, stout man, with a rubicund-face like a full moon—genial, jovial and good-natured. He had travelled that road for thirty-years, and was well-known as the best whip on the road: 'Go by the "Flyer," Jipstone will take care of you,' was the usual advice to any one about to travel north. The farmer and his son were the only two outside passengers on this cold raw morning, and when they had taken their places,

the guard blew his horn and they started. Soon they reached the town, and drew up before the 'Black Swan,' where the tired horses were taken off and fresh ones put to, and where the coachman and guard breakfasted. Mr. Jacques and Willie spent the time in seeing a little of the town, which was dimly lighted by oil lamps; 'the oil for which,' Willie observed, 'he was going to help to supply.'

When they resumed their journey it was daylight, and Willie could see a little of the surrounding country. The distant hills interested him: he had lived in a flat part, with scarcely an undulation, and therefore was the more pleased to see the bold, snow-capped hills; and he wondered if the icebergs he had heard so much about would look like them. But his thoughts were scattered by the coachman's cheery voice:

'So, young man, you are going to try the sea, eh?'

'Yes, Sir.'

'What service do you favour? The merchant, I suppose.'

'No, Sir; I am going to the whale-fishery.'

'Ah, to Greenland, or Davis' Straits, as the case may be! Well, you will find it cold there: this is nothing to it, I'm told; it freezes your hair into icicles.'

'Yes, I expect to find it very cold, but as other boys can bear it, why, so can I.'

'That's right, boy; "what man has done, man may do," was a copy I wrote when a lad myself. I never forgot it; and when I learned to drive, I meant to do it as well as any man. And I believe I can do it, tidily; so you see the copy did me no harm.' And the coachman smiled complacently as he smacked his whip, and encouraged his horses to a brisker pace.

'Well,' he resumed after a pause, 'well, the oil-trade is very fresh at the present, not to mention the whalebone

manufacture. I could name two or three who during my time have made famous fortunes by it. You may do well if you will, young man: all depends on yourself. Keep steady, and do your duty,—you are sure to get on.'

'Then you think to be a sailor is not such a bad choice, after all?' asked the anxious father.

'Not a bad choice, by any manner of means; but not one I should fancy. For, you see, I like living things to manage, that know when I speak to them, which a ship does not.'

'But you may manage a ship, and make it obey you,' said Willie.

'Right, always supposing wind and waves will let it. But we are not all alike, and what contents me would not satisfy you; for you want to see the world of ice.'

'Indeed I do, and the great whales.'

'And the bears,' slyly remarked Jipstone.

'Yes,' responded Willie, with enthusiasm, 'and the white foxes and the Arctic birds.'

'You will be gratified before you drive with me again, and will have perhaps killed a whale.'

'I should like; but I am afraid they will not let me try.'

'What ship will you sail in?'

'The "Bonnie Sarah," Captain Winter.'

'Ay, ay, I know him; not a smarter sailor or a better master sails out of L——; and the owners are the best I know: upright, liberal men. You have been fortunate in your choice: the "Bonnie Sarah" is a good sailer, and far more comfortable than many of the whalers, which, to say the least of them, are dirty old tubs. Why, I went on board of one last October, and was heartily glad to get out of her. How men can live five or six months among blubber-casks is more than I can tell.'

‘But the casks are in the hold, and the men don’t live down there.’

‘All the same: the smell is abominable—ugh;’ and so saying, with a gesture of intense disgust, the coachman changed the subject. He then pointed out places of interest on the road, and narrated incidents that had happened to him during the last thirty years, so the day passed more quickly than Willie had expected.

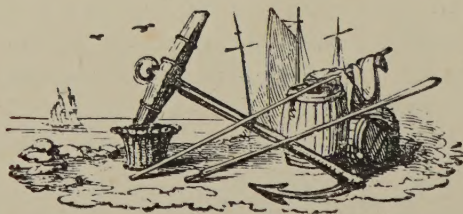
It was towards evening when the coach reached its destination. The town was lighted, not with the brilliant gas of the present day, but with a plentiful supply of oil-lamps. The light could be seen for a great distance, and Willie was enthusiastic in his admiration. As the coach wound round a slight curve, he came in sight of a row of large handsome houses that to him looked like palaces, and he thought the town must be, if not the finest, one of the finest in England. Then he imagined it must be also one of the largest, they went through so many streets before they reached the hotel at which the coach stopped.

Mr. Jacques had in his pocket-book the address of an inn to which he had been recommended, and showed it to Jipstone; who told him he knew the inn-keeper, and that he was the right sort of man. He said that Mr. Alton would make them thoroughly comfortable, and not overcharge them, and that the inn was close by. So calling a porter, the driver told him to conduct the two strangers to the ‘Anchor and Cleaver.’ Willie wanted to give the kind-hearted Jipstone a gratuity, but he refused to take it:

‘Nay, my lad, not this time. You will be going with me again some day; then you shall “spin me a yarn,” as the sailors call it, in return for mine to-day. You will have plenty to tell me when you come back from Greenland. And

when you kill a bear, you can give me a bit of his skin to make a cap to keep my ears warm on a day like this. Good-bye, good-bye, and good success to you.'

The 'Anchor and Cleaver' was a respectable, well-conducted house, and the landlord was not entirely self-seeking. As soon as he glanced at the two visitors he saw they were from the country, and leading the way to his own little parlour, called his good wife. He had no need to tell her that the travellers were cold and hungry: she could see the one and imagine the other, so she replenished the already blazing fire, and then went into the kitchen to prepare substantial refreshment. She soon had ready for them tea, toast, and a large dish of fried ham and eggs; so that, had it not been for the strange faces, Willie could almost have fancied himself at home. Mrs. Alton presided at the tea-table, and literally compelled the travellers to do ample justice to the fare she had provided. When her husband came in the farmer told him his errand to L—. Alton knew the captain of the 'Bonnie Sarah,' and offered to go with them to the docks on the following morning. The offer was gladly accepted by the strangers, who felt bewildered amidst the forest of houses. Willie being sleepy, they retired to rest early.



CHAPTER III.

'THE 'BONNIE SARAH.'

IN the morning, accompanied by Alton, they went to the dock in which the 'Bonnie Sarah' was moored, and found the captain on board. He was a fine specimen of the British sailor, rather tall, well-formed, and had an open, genial countenance that at once won confidence. He knew Mr. Jacques well, and shook his hand cordially, all the while glancing at the boy by his side.

'So you want to be a sailor?'

'Yes, Sir; ' and Willie coloured to the temples—why, he could not have told.

'Then you don't care to follow the plough, as your father has done?'

'No, Sir.'

'You will find that a sailor's life is a very rough one. You cannot run into a house for shelter, when a storm comes on the sea. Then you are confined to one small vessel for many months,—no going to market on Saturdays; no church-bell to invite you to the house of prayer on Sundays; no weekly paper to tell you the latest news. Do you think you will be content with such a life?'

'Yes, Sir; because I shall have work to do, and I mean to learn to do it.'

'That is right, boy. Keep yourself well employed, then it will not matter whether you be on land or sea: you will

be kept out of mischief. Now go with Jack, and look over the ship while I talk to your father and Mr. Alton.'

The boy Jack was a tall, awkward youth with yellow hair, small eyes and very thick lips; altogether his appearance was not prepossessing. Jack nodded his head, and led the way to the fore-castle with a shuffling gait. When the two had descended the ladder, and were out of hearing, he turned to Willie, and said in a sneering tone, 'So you are going to try the sea, are you, youngster? Better be a clodhopper.'

'Why do you say that to *me*?'

'To *you*? Ah! ah!—that is good. Who are you, that I should not say so to you?'

'A stranger to you, whom you were to show over the ship, and not ask impertinent questions,' returned Willie, gravely. He did not like his companion's manner, and determined to check his undue familiarity.

'Ah, that's your game, is it! Well, then, look here; this is where we eat our meals, and through there is where we sleep. Come, you would like to see your bed; this will be it'.

'What, that funny thing hung up to the top. How shall I ever get into it?'

'"Turn in," we say, you get in fast enough; and get out faster, I reckon.'

'What do you mean?'

'O, you will soon know! I'm not going to tell you. Come into the hold; we can go down this ladder.'

'What a great dark place!' exclaimed Willie. 'And what are all these casks for?'

'Them, why they are for blubber—when we get it.'

'But these nice clean ones?'

'O, we are going to take these to G—for butcher's meat,

which we always get there. Then there are the water-casks, and casks of flour and biscuits, besides stores of all sorts.'

'Then you pack every thing in casks?'

'Of course we do. We can't run to the shop for every thing we want. But we have some closets—*lockers* we call them—in the cabin we just left.'

'I did not see them.'

'O, I dare say you thought them only seats! they go round the cabin, and are both seats and lockers. You will have one, and let me advise you to keep it locked, for greet-mice—'

'What is that you are saying, Jack?' shouted a hearty voice from some part of the hold. Whence the voice came Willie could not tell, until a black curly head appeared above a cask at some distance.

'Is that you, George?'

'Yes, it is me, sure enough; and I want to know what you are telling the boy.'

'Only that there are mice aboard.'

'Ay, ay, and rats too, and some very queer, tawny ones; so you do right to tell him beware,' remarked the sailor, as he came forward and shook hands with Willie.

'So you are going to sea?' But how differently the question was put!

'Yes, Sir.'

'Well, my boy, if you like it half as well as I do, you will never repent becoming a salt.'

'But he may swallow the marline-spike, you know, George.'

'What you ought to have done, Jack.'

'Now that is too bad, George.'

George eyed the youth with a curious glance, but, making

no further remark to him, began to show him several things that excited his interest. Jack soon left them in high dudgeon, muttering, 'I saw captain liked him, and now George; a fine time I shall have; but I'll be even with 'em.'

George Nicholson, harpooner of the 'Bonnie Sarah,' was remarkably tall for a sailor, and was not a little proud of his fine, well-knit frame. His face was handsome, but that he seemed not to know; or if he did, he cared not for it. His eyes were very dark and piercing, but they would soften to tenderness; and as Willie looked at him and listened to him, he thought he could trust him entirely. Time will tell whether the boy's instinct was true. However, by the time Willie rejoined his father and Captain Winter, he had numbered George Nicholson among his friends.

'You look as though you were satisfied with your future quarters, Willie.'

'I like the ship very much, father. Won't you walk over it?'

'Yes, Mr. Jacques, you must see the vessel. You tell me you have never been over one; I will go with you.'

Escorted by the courteous captain, the farmer did go over the vessel. But he could not conceal his surprise that any one could prefer the close cabin, with its circumscribed accommodation, and the hammocks, to a neat sitting-room and comfortable bed-rooms at home. For his part, no prospect of future gain should tempt him to shut himself up, or 'smother' himself, as he termed it, 'in them swinging things.' Even the captain's cabin and state-room were, in his opinion, 'too small for a good pig-sty.' Captain Winter good-naturedly laughed at his remarks; and told him that, had he gone to sea when a boy, he would have loved his ship, and would have thought no place so good. Mr. Jacques shook

his head; he could not be convinced. He and Willie dined with Captain Winter, who informed them that the vessel would not sail for a few weeks; adding that in the meantime Willie could begin to learn navigation: he could then follow it up on board, under the superintendence of George Nicholson, who was a capital scholar. Willie's eyes glistened as he heard what was said: this was the commencement of his plan. He would try, he said, to do his best.

In the evening, it being Saturday, they went into the shambles to see the butchers'-shops, a new and wonderful sight to Willie, who wondered where the people would come from to buy all the meat that he saw in the large market-house. He enjoyed the bustle and confusion, and did not mind being pushed about; but his father disliked the noise, and wished himself in his own quiet home. He had never been accustomed to such a crowd, and had all a countryman's aversion to it. On the Monday came the parting. On Sunday, at service, when the prayer for sailors was read, Willie gently touched his father; and when they were in the street he said, 'Father, you will always think of me at service. I never thought before how everybody at service prays for those on the sea; but now I shall think of that when I read it. And, father, I'll try to act as you have taught me. So don't trouble too much about me.'

The father could not answer in words, but he pressed the hand he held, and Willie saw a suspicious brightness in his father's eyes. Were anything wanting to strengthen his resolve to be a true man, this would have done it. 'How fond father is of me!' was his mental comment; 'it would be a shame if I did not try to please him.'

CHAPTER IV.

WILLIE'S FIRST VOYAGE.

IN a few weeks the 'Bonnie Sarah' left port, and Willie might be said to have fully embarked on the life he had chosen. At the Orkneys he had his first taste of real rough weather, which he bore well, and was pronounced by George Nicholson fit to be a sailor. At Lerwick, in Shetland, they took in their full compliment of men. After leaving the island, when Willie one night went to bed, he could not get in, the sheets, or rather blankets, being knotted together. He undid them with a little groan of dissatisfaction, but made no remark, to the disappointment of one who was a hidden witness. The next night he had no sooner got to sleep than down went the head of his hammock, and he narrowly escaped striking against the edge of a chest.

'O! O!' he ejaculated, and then set himself to repair the damage, which with some trouble he effected, so as to be able once more to get into his cot. But this time he did not sleep. He had been perhaps an hour lying awake, when he became sure some one was creeping underneath. He raised himself, to see, if he could, who it was. He could not see the person, but he saw something that looked bright, so caught hold of the hooks of his hammock so as not to fall a second time. But the rope was not cut again; the knife, or whatever it was, was gently thrust through the canvas. He could feel it touch his leg, and drew himself up, as much as

possible, so as not to be wounded. A second time it was pushed through, and then the evil-doer crawled away. Willie thought it was Jack, but he could not see distinctly, so would not be sure. But he told his friend Nicholson the next morning, who said :

‘Willie, you were dreaming ; no one on board would attempt to injure you in that way. No ! no ! it was all fancy.’

‘Is that fancy, George ?’ asked Willie, baring his leg and showing a wound.

‘You don’t mean to tell me that you received that in your sleep ?’

‘Not in my sleep, George ; I was awake, as I tell you, and took hold of the hooks and pulled myself up as far as I could ; you know it was too dark to see, and the thing crawled under my hammock, and I suppose never thought of looking up : the steel came in twice ; if you will come with me you will see the two cuts in the canvas.’

‘That I will, but I expect to find it all a delusion of your imagination.’

But it was fact, as Nicholson declared, when he saw the hammock. But who was the doer of such a cowardly trick ? He had a shrewd suspicion, but merely gave a little grunt, a habit with him when he was ‘put out.’

The other apprentices and some of the men were at breakfast when Nicholson and Willie entered the forecabin ; so the harpooner said :

‘I say, men, did you know we had a murderer on board ?’

‘Why, no, George ; you don’t mean that ?’ some of them replied.

‘I believe I do. But there is one comfort for us,—that murderers are always hanged.’

'What has been done, George, that you talk in this way?' asked one of the men.

'Nay, I shall not say what has been done, or not done.'



View of Lerwick, Shetland.

See page 26.

Only I thought I would tell you, so that should anything happen to me you might not be too much surprised.'

'To *you*, George? Why, he would be a daring fellow who would attempt to do aught to you.'

'So I think; but there is no knowing. I am not always awake.'

'Now, George, you are up to some nonsense or other.'

'Never was more sober, men. But enough; I've got all I wanted.'

Nicholson said this in a significant tone understood by *one*. Then he left the forecastle, and the men laughed and said, 'I wonder what George is up to?'

There was one present, however, who fully understood the inference to be drawn from Nicholson's words, and who now knew that whoever attempted to harm Willie would have to account to him.

When alone with Willie, Nicholson said, 'I see, Willie, that you know when to hold your tongue. Keep silence as to what has passed. I don't think that game will be tried again. You won't care about your blankets being tied, and such things; young lads are always teased when they first go to sea.'

'Not I, Nicholson. They may knot them every night, if they like; they will take more trouble than they give me.'

'That is right; laugh at their folly, and they will soon leave it off.'

Both used the word 'they,' yet both knew that they meant one—Jack. Why he should have a spite against an unoffending lad, neither took the trouble to enquire. It was his 'evil disposition,' was the remark made, and there the matter dropped for the present.

But Willie thought, as he walked away, 'Mother often said that every place and position has its trials; so I suppose Jack is to be mine, for all the men are kind to me, and I like being here. Well, one surly temper is not much, to be sure. I must try to be true and just to him as well as to myself, and not let my temper get the better of me; yet he must not imagine that I am a muff, to be pinched and sat upon at pleasure.'

About a week after this, Willie was busy with some rope. Jack came on deck wearing a pair of very strong boots, and, passing in front of Willie, gave him a kick that took the skin off his leg. To throw down the rope and catch the collar of Jack's jacket and box his ears soundly was the work of a second.

'Halloo! No fighting on the deck of this ship,' called out the mate as he came up to the youths; 'what is the matter, lads? can't you agree?'

'This Bible-reading chawbacon struck me,' sulkily replied Jack, while Willie stood on one side, his face flushed and his teeth set, as though he were determined not to speak. The mate looked at him, and in a severe tone said:

'How dare you strike your senior by three years? What excuse can you make for such conduct?'

'Only this,' responded Willie, pointing to several drops of blood on the deck.

'Ah! where have they come from? tell me;' and as Willie did not speak, the mate turned to Jack, repeating the question.

'How should I know?'

'Where did you strike him? for I take it you struck the first blow. I insist upon knowing. Fighting is not, and shall not be, allowed so long as I walk this deck.'

‘I did not strike him.’

‘What then?’ said the mate, fixing his piercing grey eye upon Jack, who fidgeted about on one foot, and looked anywhere but at the mate. ‘What then, Sir?’ repeated the officer, in a stern tone.

‘I gave him a push with my foot as I passed.’

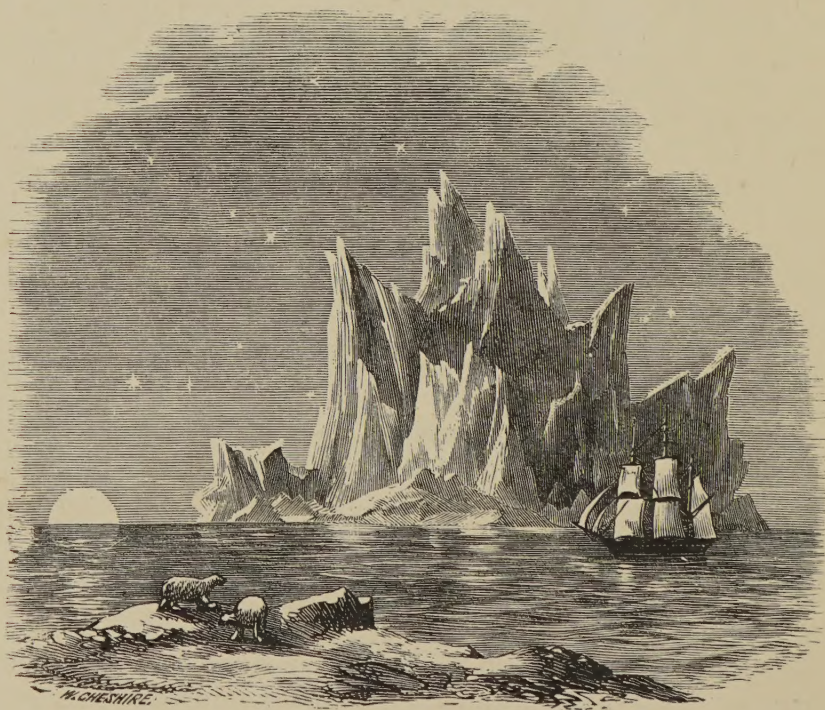
‘A push, eh? a pretty severe one, to draw blood. Don’t you think yourself a bully and a coward to give a kick like that, and with such boots as I see you wearing? You go aloft for three hours.’

‘Please, Sir, will you let Jack off this time? I dare say he will not do the like again, and my leg will soon be well,’ exclaimed Willie, in a very humble tone, as though he felt himself to be the culprit. The officer eyed first one and then the other in silence for a few moments, and then said, in his most severe tone of voice, ‘For this time you may go free; but mind you, Sir, if I have again to find fault for the same cause, there will be no second reprieve, but the addition of a rope’s-ending.’

Jack slunk away; and the mate, telling Willie to go down and put some rag on the wound, went back to the quarter-deck. From this time Jack did not dare to do an injury to Willie; but he was sullen, ill-tempered, and in every possible way tried to annoy him. Willie was sorry. He would rather have been good friends; it was so disagreeable to be constantly with one so unsociable. Jack, however, resisted all his overtures towards a kinder feeling; so Willie let him alone, and went about his own duties with such cheerful energy, that before they had reached Greenland he had gained a fund of useful knowledge, and was so apt at learning navigation, that George Nicholson privately told the captain that he never had such a lad for catching things readily; he

would make a capital sailor, and no mistake. Which praise pleased the master, who had a sincere respect for Willie's father, whom he had known in more prosperous days; and he hoped that the son would be a comfort to his poor distressed parents.

The Arctic regions have been often and graphically described, but all descriptions, however well written, must fail to prepare the mind for the grandeur of those immense piles



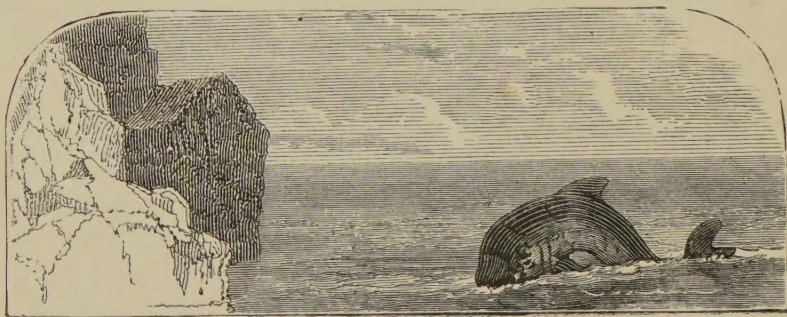
Icebergs.

of snow and ice, glittering like precious stones in the brilliancy of the short summer's sun, or bathed in the soft radiancy of the silver moonlight, not to speak of the marvellous effect of the Aurora Borealis upon the vast wintry waste.

Willie was simply lost in delighted admiration. The strange silence struck him with awe, and the first iceberg he saw moving, going on its way like a giant ready to deal destruction to whatever should impede its progress, filled him with reverent wonder ; then came the excitement of catching the first whale, which Willie had the pleasure of seeing struck by his friend Nicholson ; for he was in the rigging, and could distinctly perceive the harpoon fly from George's hand. Then for the first time he saw the cutting off and packing of the blubber. How he wished he could harpoon a whale ! but as that was impossible at the present, he contented himself with determining that he would be a good harpooner like George. Indeed, his friend was his standard of a thorough seaman, and to be like him was Willie's highest ambition ; 'I'll try,' was his mental resolve, and try he did.

One day a number of men went on the ice for the purpose of shooting wild-fowl, and Willie was permitted to go with them. The first bird George Nicholson shot he gave to the boy, promising to stuff it, that he might take it as a present to his mother. But Willie was still further gratified by his friend finding a nest with an egg in it ; this he also gave Willie to take home. But to Willie's disappointment, on this occasion they saw no bears, neither had they as yet seen any Esquimaux. However, one day a number of these peculiar people made their appearance, and two or three canoes came to the ship's side, and the men swarmed on board, picking up whatever they could lay their hands on, and then putting it to their mouth. One of the men gave a woman a large

piece of soap, telling her to wash her dirty face. She did not understand his words, but she saw his smile, and laughed in return, and put the soap into her capacious mouth, but not finding it very palatable, hastily took it out, making a frightful grimace, to the great amusement of the sailor, who, to make amends to the deceived victim, gave her a huge piece of salt pork and a couple of biscuits. Willie bartered his knife for some Esquimaux slippers of curious workmanship, but he was afraid they would be too small for his mother to wear; yet she would be pleased to see them, for even she had no idea that these poor, uneducated creatures could devise and execute such pretty patterns in different-coloured thread, as those which ornamented the slippers. The season was propitious, the 'Bonnie Sarah' was soon filled with whale and seal oil, and on her homeward way ere the severe weather again set in. Thus Willie's first experience of the Arctic Regions was extremely favourable.



CHAPTER V.

WILLIE'S RETURN.

ON the return voyage the vessel again called at Shetland to unship the men she had taken thence, and Willie was allowed to go on shore to see the curious old houses or cottages, many of which had the fire-place in the centre of the common room, with no proper outlet for the smoke. In some he saw fowls, and even sheep, in the same room as the family. He wondered at the primitive habits of the people, but still more at their clever productions in Shetland wool, and bought several pairs of beautifully white knitted gloves for his good mother.

Having arrived in port, for a few weeks every one was busy. Then some of the hands were paid off in time to make a short winter trip. Willie had a few weeks' leave at Christmas. It was the custom of the owners of the ship to give to each of their apprentices a Christmas present before they went to their homes. When Mr. Dalton sent for Willie to receive his, he said, in a pleased tone :

'I am glad to hear from Captain Winter that you have been a good lad all through the voyage, obedient and attentive to your duties, also that you have made some progress in navigation ; go on steadily as you have begun and you are sure to succeed, and as a mark of my approbation, I shall double the amount I usually give to my youngest apprentice.'

Willie's face flushed with joyful surprise, and he could find

no words in which to thank his kind owner ; but Mr. Dalton was satisfied, shook him cordially by the hand, and wished him a happy Christmas with his parents.

This last act won Willie's heart ; thenceforth he would have done any possible thing for Mr. Dalton, nor did after years alter in one iota the boy's enthusiastic respect for the gentleman who had so kindly noticed him, a poor boy.

Willie did not send word to his parents when to expect him ; he wished to surprise them. He would very much have liked to take George with him, but did not know how his parents might be situated, for Willie did not forget that he should not find them at the dear old farm. George went with him to engage his place on the coach, also to see his friends the Altons, who exclaimed at his growth, declaring that but for his sunny smile they should not have known him again. They would have him and Nicholson take supper with them ; then they charged Willie with many kind messages for his father, and told him that he must come to see them more frequently. Willie thought them very kind, but remarked to his friend that he should not care to go often, because he could see that Mr. Alton did not quite like his refusal of the glass of spirits prepared for him ; and that he did not wish to offend him, nor could he break the promise he had made to himself never to touch spirits unless in a case of necessity.

On reaching their lodgings, Willie found a letter from his father. His cheek paled and his hand trembled : surely his mother was not ill, she managed the correspondence of the family, never before had he known his father write a letter. He turned it over and over, not daring to break the seal.

'Now, Willie, don't be a baby ; open your letter and see what it contains before you make yourself miserable.'

‘You see, George, father never writes letters, so mother must be ill.’

‘Nonsense, boy, he is glad you have come back with your nose on your face, and writes to tell you so.’

‘Well, here goes,’ cried Willie, breaking the seal and unfolding the large sheet. A pleased smile dimpled his face as he continued to read, which augured well for the contents.

‘There, George, read that, and then say yes.’

He handed the letter to his friend, who read aloud :

‘MY DEAR BOY,—When are you coming home? your mother and I are very anxious to see you as soon as your good captain can spare you. But this is not the only reason for my writing, which you know is a trouble to me, but your mother said I must. Now to come to the point. We shall be glad to see the “George” you talk about in your letters, and who you say has been such a good friend to you. Our cottage is small, but we have a spare bed, and a loft for you, which you will not mind ; for if you are as fond of George as I fancy, you would rather have his company than the best bed. Tell him he will be heartily welcome to the little we have, and he need not fear being a trouble to your mother, for we have a very good girl this year, Bessie Luke ; you will not have forgotten her, she is active and likes work. So you see there is really nothing to make him afraid of coming, if he will ; but maybe he has friends in the town with whom he would rather spend Christmas. If he will come, he shall be welcome.

‘From your loving father,

‘W. JACQUES.

‘*The Pond Farm. December, 18—*’

‘Now, George, say you will go, there’s a good fellow.’

'You see, Willie, I am quite a stranger.'

'Nonsense, George; why my father and mother seem to know you already, and you will be at home with them directly; my mother is the dearest little woman in the world, you cannot help liking her; and my father always says what he means; so when he tells you that you will be "heartily welcome," you may be sure of it; then Bessie Luke is very pretty, with black hair like yours, and dark eyes; she would do for that "Black Eyed Susan" you sing about. George, you must go. Let us go back to the coach-office and get the box-seat.'

'Too late, Willie, it is nine o'clock.'

'No, the office does not close until ten; come, old fellow, or would you like me to put off going until Monday? I will if you wish it.'

'No, Willie, lad, that would take away one of your Sundays; no! I must not do that, or my welcome might be doubtful. If I do go, it may as well be to-morrow as any day. I can soon pack my kit.'

'Come then, let us away.'

The box-seat was secured, and Willie found that Jipstone would drive. The following morning was fine but intensely cold, so that even the two Arctic voyagers found it necessary to button their overcoats close, and pull their travelling caps well over their ears to protect them from the piercing north-east wind. Willie was climbing up to his seat when Jipstone's voice arrested him:

'I say, Sir, will you please take your place on the next seat, this here is taken by a young man who ought to be here now.'

'Halloo, Jipstone, have you forgotten me?'

'That's not likely, Sir, when I never saw you before; never forgets a face that's once travelled with me.'

'Then look at mine,' laughed Willie, who had now seated

himself and pushed up his cap so that his healthy, smiling face was fully exposed.

‘Bless me ! that I should not know you, my boy. Well, how do you do ? glad to see you looking so hearty, and is this a friend of yours ?’

‘Yes, Mr. Jipstone ; and he is going with me, so you will let him sit next me.’

‘To be sure ! to be sure ! happy to accommodate any friend of yours ; get up, Sir, time we started ; luggage all right ?’

Soon they left the town and its thousand lamps far behind. Willie looked back for a view of the town, but he was not so impressed with the effect of light and shade as he had been on his first entrance. How long it seemed, yet it was in reality only a few months. Now they were crossing the little bridge he so well remembered, because there it was he first caught sight of the long row of lights which extended for about half a mile in a straight line before the road curved a little.

Having crossed the stream and passed through the turnpike-gate, there would be nothing to distract attention for at least five miles, so Jipstone gave his horses a gentle reminder to quicken their pace, then claimed Willie’s long-promised yarns. Willie modestly tried to excuse himself, saying that his friend George could tell so much more about Greenland and Davis’ Straits than he could, as he had only seen the former, and that during one of the finest summers that had been known for many years. But the coachman would not be put off ; he wanted to hear a youthful account, saying he had heard the yarns of old sailors times without count, but not one from a young country lad. So Willie was obliged to comply, and soon became so enthusiastic in his description of Arctic scenery that Jipstone called out :

'Stop! stop! or I shall want to go and see for myself the wonders of that fairy land.'

'Perhaps you would not like it so well as driving, Mr. Jipstone.'

'Why, no! I hardly think I should, so I will be content with hearing; now you, friend, will perhaps give me the dark side to reconcile me to my hard fate in being compelled to forego such a grand spectacle.'

Nicholson, thus drawn into conversation, told many a strange and exciting story of sea-life. He had a fund of humour as well as of anecdote, which elicited many a hearty laugh, and a 'Now, really now! is not that a sailor's stretch of imagination?'

The journey was nearly ended, the coach had drawn up at the little way-side house where stood the farmer's cart ready to take them home, and better still the farmer to welcome them. Willie jumped down regardless of wheels, and in his delight shook his father's hand until the farmer cried,

'Why, Willie, you are forgetting Mr. George.'

Thus admonished, Willie duly presented his friend, then ran back to bid the coachman good-bye.

'Mr. Jipstone, I have not got a bear-skin for you yet, but I will not forget; meanwhile wear these, you can tell me how you like them when I go back to L——.'

And thrusting a brown paper into Jipstone's outstretched hand, he rushed back to his father without waiting for thanks. George Nicholson was already seated, and the farmer had the reins in his hand ready to start, so Willie jumped up, and they drove off, Jipstone vociferating at the top of his loud voice, 'A merry Christmas to you, and a good New Year when it comes.'

CHAPTER VI.

AT HOME AGAIN.

THE Pond Cottage, so named because it stood close to a large pond where numbers of ducks enjoyed their bath and a few swans made their home, was enclosed by a wooden fence painted white; the gate was propped open, and the farmer drove through up to the kitchen door, which stood wide open, emitting a cheerful glow from the blazing wood and turf fire on the hearth. Mrs. Jacques stood on the causeway, and in one moment Willie was in her arms, and in that happy embrace the fond mother forgot all the anxieties of the past months. But hospitable cares claimed her attention, and she kindly bade Mr. Nicholson consider himself at home so long as he remained under their roof, thus confirming the welcome already accorded by her husband. And George Nicholson, who was one of the most genial-hearted men living, did as he was bidden; enjoyed the good things provided; listened to the farmer's news of his stock as though he had been brought up upon a farm, much to the amusement of Willie, who knew that this was the first time George had seen a farm in his life; helped Mrs. Jacques churn her butter, and carried the milk-pails for pretty Bessie Luke. The farmer was delighted with him, and declared he never thought a sailor could be so handy, to which George responded that sailors were generally considered the most useful men living, that they had so much to do for themselves, that they naturally took to work of all kinds.

'Father, you should see George sew.'

'Sew ! that is women's work.'

'But, father, women don't go to Greenland.'

'No !' responded George ; 'it is said only one woman ever did venture there, and the vessel in which she was, was locked in by ice and foundered.'

'She had no business to go to that outlandish place,' said the farmer, sternly. Willie laughed, and said :

'Well, then, father, as you say women ought not to go—and, indeed, I don't think they could live there,—men must sew and wash.'

'Wash !' interrupted the farmer in utter astonishment ; 'wash ! that is worse than sewing.'

Willie held his sides and laughed loudly.

'Why, father, what did you think ? that the men took linen to serve them all those months ? what chests they would want !'

'No, Willie, I did not think at all, I see that now ; but sewing and washing !'

'Father, I am learning, and I shall soon be able to darn your stockings, if mother will let me.'

'Nay, nay, Willie, it will do if you darn your own while at sea ; I should not fancy mine if you did them.'

'Did you hear that, mother ? father would not wear my darning. Yet I will try to do that as well as you do. You will give me lessons, won't you, mother mine ?'

'Certainly, if you wish ; but I think you scarcely need lessons, if you darned your stockings, they are done as neatly as I could have done them.'

'Mother, I am so glad you say that, because I think them capitably mended, and so I told George, but he would not listen to me ; he did them, not I. I must learn, and I'll try

to darn as well as he does, and make a pair of trousers as cleverly, then I shall be satisfied.'

'So you intend to be a tailor? do you?' said Mrs. Jacques, pleasantly; for she saw that George did not like to have his doings talked about.

'Tailor, no!' returned Willie, in a tone of supreme contempt. 'Tailor, indeed! see a tailor make a pair of canvas trousers. I see, mother, you know nothing about sailors.'

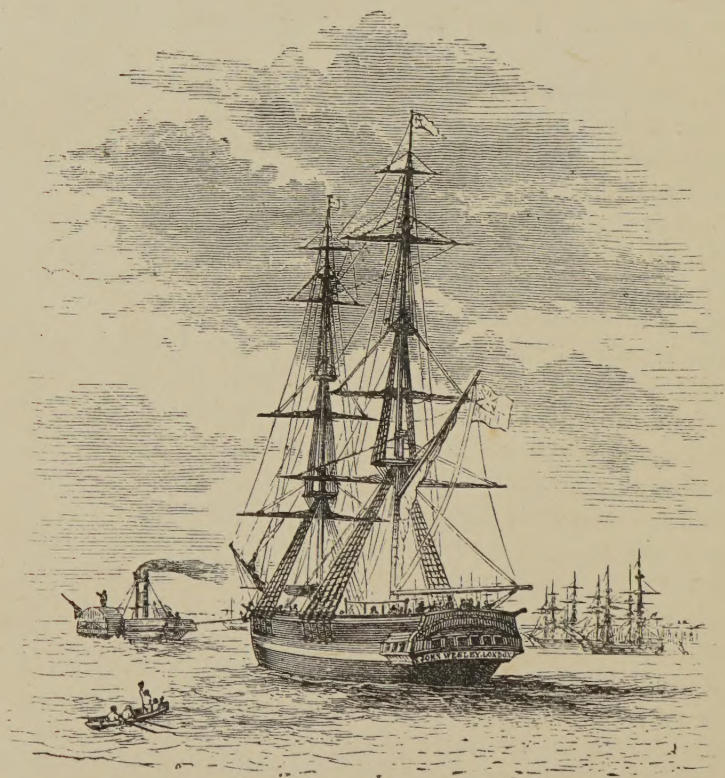
'No, my boy, seeing that you are the first of my family that ever went to sea; but you will teach me, and by the time you are a man, I dare say I shall be quite learned in nautical matters.'

'That is right, mother; it will then be so nice to tell you everything, because you will understand me.'

'Then, I suppose, the first thing will be to remember the difference between a ship and a barque.'

'To be sure, you must not forget that I sail in a ship,' returned Willie, a little proudly, greatly to the amusement of his friend, for had Willie been the commander he could scarcely have loved his ship more. The boy's love for his profession was sincere and hearty, and whatever belonged to it or would help him forward in it he determined to learn to do (or as he said, 'I'll try'), and this not for himself, but that he might help his parents. He had one object ever before him, which was to buy 'Newton Grange,' so that his parents might return thither. He never mentioned this for fear of being laughed at; for like all high-spirited, sensitive lads he hated to have his notions ridiculed, and therefore kept his great resolves to himself. It never entered his head that either his father or mother might die ere he could accomplish his purpose; he always pictured them together, either sitting

in their arm-chairs by the fire, or under the rose-covered porch—as he had seen them many and many a time in years gone by. Happy dreams, which made much of the sunshine of his life, and before which difficulties and dangers disappeared, or had lost the power to daunt.



CHAPTER VII.

A PLEASANT SURPRISE.

IT had always been the farmer's wish to keep up the family customs on Christmas-eve, and Mrs. Jacques had entered into his spirit, so that it was a season of festivity and rejoicing to all beneath their hospitable roof. For each servant, men and women, a large plum loaf was made, and put on the table by their plates to do what they pleased with it. It was usually sent home, or if that were not possible, as sometimes happened, it was kept to regale their own particular friends, as Mrs. Jacques always provided plenty of plum, or 'spice-bread,' as they called it, for home consumption. Then there was the large Cheshire cheese, and the pan of frumenty, without which it would not have seemed Christmas-tide, and the roaring yule-log, the large wax candles on the table, and the bright holly with its clustering red berries, which used to transform the hall at the Grange into a brilliant bower of warmth and beauty.

Mrs. Jacques had heard her husband sigh as he told George Nicholson that he wished he could have spent Christmas at the Grange, for then it would have been something like, but now—and he stopped, as though the present contrasted too forcibly with the past to be endurable. The day before Christmas being the market-day, the farmer was absent; he had asked both Willie and George to go with him in the tax-cart, but to his vexation both had excused themselves, saying

they would go the next week. So instead of driving, the farmer rode, as he had nothing to bring back with him to require the cart,—no large cheese, etc., this year ; they must alter with their altered fortunes, so he sorrowfully told himself.

Mrs. Jacques intended to surprise and please her husband, by making this Christmas-eve as much like those passed at the dear old Grange as possible. She had privately sent for part of a cheese, and had prepared plum-bread for the household and the two servants in the usual way, and had enlisted the services of the two sailors to help in decorating the cottage in a becoming manner. George entered as heartily into the service as did Willie. Both set out immediately after breakfast for holly with plenty of berries, and box, of which there was abundance ; these, mixed with laurel from the garden, beautified the cottage rooms until even Mrs. Jacques declared she should not have known them. Then they helped to chop the mince-meat, feed the oven with fuel, and George tended the boiling of wheat for frumenty, and was so generally useful that Mrs. Jacques said he was as handy as Bessie, and that was saying much for him, and never before had she had such a neat, clever maiden. George's face glowed at this praise, not for himself, but for pretty Bessie's sake ; for he had privately thought that Bessie was unequalled for cleanliness, neatness and activity, and it pleased him to hear his opinion confirmed by so good a judge as Mrs. Jacques. But to return : the servant-man had put the huge log on the fire with a—

'There, Missis, you never had a finer log in all your life.'

George had lighted the wax candles, and Willie had helped to spread the supper-table ; the frumenty was ready, the mince-pies baked, before the farmer rode through the gate, and up to the causeway where the man stood ready to take

his horse. The kitchen door was open, and his good wife stood ready to receive him just as she had done on other days. Light and warmth greeted him, and as he entered the house he put up his hand to shade his eyes. That could not be the kitchen he had left only that morning ! so transformed did it seem. Then all the arrangements were so exactly similar to what had been at the Grange, that he fancied he must be dreaming. He had expected nothing, yet everything was prepared for his enjoyment. He could not speak, but he did murmur to himself, 'I am not deserving of this, grumbling as I have been at Heaven's dispensations.'

Willie's voice roused him, as he laughingly cried, 'Well, father, how do you think the old place looks?'

'The picture of home comfort, my boy.'

'Then you like the decorations, father?'

'Why, I should be a bear—one of your Greenland bears—if I did not.'

'That's right, father ; George has done it splendidly.'

'Yes, I am much indebted to your friend ; I do not know how this season would have passed without him.'

'You do me too much honour, Mr. Jacques. I am the obliged person, for I can truly say I never enjoyed a visit so much as I have done this ; I had not the least idea that the country could be so pleasant. You know I have lived all my life in town, and, like many, had a horror of the country.'

'Ah, well, you will carry back with you a better opinion of the country, and may I add, country folks?'

'That you may, Mr. Jacques ; and I hope that this will not be my last visit to a place that has proved the pleasantest I have ever known.'

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTMAS-EVE AT POND COTTAGE.

‘Now, Mrs. Jacques,’ called out a pleasant voice from the door, ‘will you give me a welcome? for they have such gay doings amongst the youngsters at my house, that I am completely turned out.’

‘Too bad to send you adrift on this night, of all others, Mr. Thirlwell, but we are glad you have come to us, and we will try to entertain you.’

‘No fear of my being entertained when you have two such great travellers to tell me wonderful stories of what they have seen and gone through.’

‘Come, sit down, Mr. Thirlwell, the supper is ready; we will have it first, and the tales afterwards.’

Mr. Thirlwell took his place near the farmer; but before they had arranged themselves at the table, another friend came in.

‘Why, Mr. Bellerby, I am glad to see you; will you take some supper with us?’

‘If you will have me, Mr. Jacques. You see, my good folks have all gone to Thirlwell’s,’ nodding at Mr. Thirlwell; ‘he, I see, is turned out because of noise, and I turned out because the house was so quiet. Only my old dame and the servants.’

‘But Mrs. Bellerby will scarcely like to be left.’

‘O, she does not mind; she said I had better come, then



Christmas-eve at Pond Cottage.

I should enjoy a social evening, and she should have time to attend to the preparations for to-morrow, which brings me to the chief part of my errand, which is to ask you all to come to tea and supper ; and '—turning to George—'we hope for the pleasure of your society, Mr. Nicholson. You will find us very homely folks, but you will be heartily welcome, and we will do our best to make the time pass agreeably.'

The two farmers, both very old friends of the Jacques', had agreed together to spend this evening with them, that they might not think their leaving the Grange had made any difference in the kind regards of old friends ; so, at considerable sacrifice of their own wishes, they met, as recorded, at Pond Cottage ; and if kindness be its own reward, then were they abundantly repaid, for they not only spent a remarkably pleasant evening, but they had the pleasure of seeing their old friend brighten up under the cheering influence of their company, and for a time almost forget that he was now a poor man.

Willie was all life and fun. George's humour and quaint stories kept the farmers in a state of hilarity ; and yet the mirth was partly due to the natural gladness of those who, from the kindest motives, had determined to cheer and support one whom they had so long respected, and who, through no wilful fault of his own, had descended from their own social position, but who was and ever would be considered as a true friend. And on this evening, for the first time since leaving the Grange, Farmer Jacques seemed to become aware that his changed circumstances had but knitted closer the bonds of true friendship, and he became more reconciled to his position in consequence.

Nor was Willie too young to be influenced by the hearty friendliness of the two wealthy farmers to his parents ; and

he thought, 'If my father had not been an upright, honest man, and my mother a good woman, these men, who are so rich, would not have come to our poor house; I'll try to be like father, that I will; I ought, because I have such an example. I am glad George sees how my father and mother are treated by their neighbours, because he is such a good fellow, and has been so kind to me; and he will now see he has not been deceived. Deceived! why, I don't think I could deceive anybody, if I tried ever so; they would be sure to find me out, although Jack did tell the men I was a hypocrite and a deceiver. Poor Jack! I wonder how he is spending this night; not so happily as I am, poor fellow! I must try to be kind to him, and then perhaps—'

Here Willie's thoughts were brought to a sudden conclusion by Mr. Bellerby striking the table to draw attention to what he was going to say. He then rose, and proposed in a stentorian voice, 'Health and prosperity to the young sailor!'

Willie coloured with pleasure, but was at a loss for words; so merely said, 'Thank you for your very good wishes, which I'll try to deserve.'



CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTMAS-DAY.

CHRISTMAS morning was bright and frosty, and all that could be spared went to the service and offered their hearty thanks for the birth of the Saviour of the world. Then Willie and George walked home, his parents staying for the Sacrament. George would have stayed too, if he dared, but he felt ashamed to do so,—he, the careless sailor, to make a public profession of faith in a Saviour of Whom he had thought so little, and Whose footsteps he had not followed ! ‘But why should I remain careless,’ he mentally asked, and the question led to the resolve, ‘I’ll try to lead henceforth a Christian life.’

The simple, unostentatious Christianity of the Jacques’ had not been lost upon him ; he had always been steady, upright, honest, clever and remarkably intelligent, but he was not in spirit and in truth a believer in Christ. Having been an orphan from his earliest years, he could not remember any loving mother’s teachings, had known no father’s care ; and when he silently watched the tender care of Mrs. Jacques for her boy, and the farmer’s less demonstrative but equally loving anxiety for Willie, his heart went out to them in love and reverence, and he could have called them ‘Mother,’ ‘Father,’ as though they had in very truth been his own. But more than this, their earnest piety made him desire to know more of that religion which bore such sweet

fruits. He had often heard it scoffed at as a thing unworthy of men of sense, only fit for old women and children ; but he saw that it had power to solace under great trial, and to make a man, with as sound a judgment as his own, submit without murmuring to a position that would drive many almost frantic with vexation and disappointment. 'There must be more in it than I know of.'

'George, how silent you are ! Are you tired with this long walk ?'

'No, Willie, I was thinking,' responded George, gravely.

Willie looked at him. 'Are you tired of the country, George ?'

'No, I like the country. Willie, boy, I should like you to show me the text in your Bible. I have not one with me.' George did not like to confess he had not one anywhere.

'To be sure, George ; was it not a nice one ? I was so glad the Minister said what he did ; do you remember ? "With us always." I shall not forget that when I am at sea and Jack is ugly.'

'Then you think of what you hear ?'

'I try to recollect ; because you see now I do not have mother to tell me what I want to know ; then when I am puzzled about anything, I try to think, Have I heard about that from the pulpit ? because, you see, our Minister makes everything so clear that I can understand all he says, and his words have many a time kept me from getting into a rage, or doing a bad action. Next to the Bible I like his sermons.'

'Because you like the man ?'

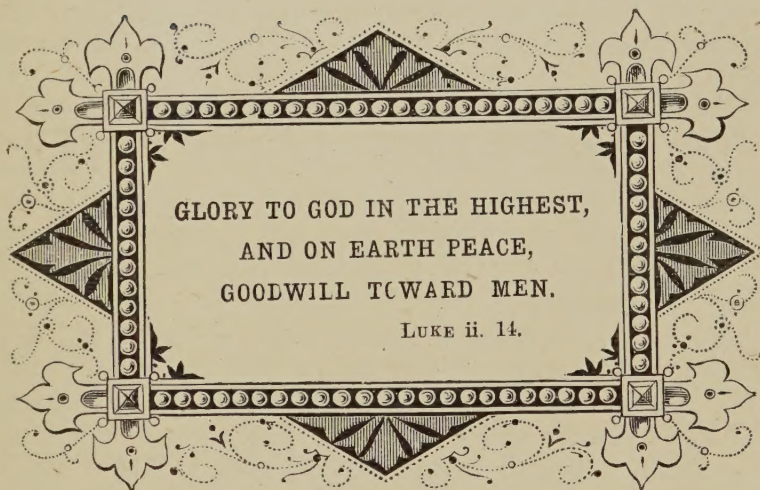
'Why, yes, he is a good man, and, I have often heard father say, practises what he preaches.'

'Willie, you have had very great advantages, you ought to be a good lad.'

'That is what I'll try to be, George.'

Willie found the text, and gave his Bible to George to read it, if he liked, until the others returned from the service, and he ran to look after some ducks and geese that he had promised to feed. Left alone, George Nicholson read the text: 'Emmanuel.' He recalled what the Minister had said, then he read other chapters of the wonderful Book which to him had been thus far a sealed volume. How strange it seemed that such words should be written, yet hidden from his eyes through ignorance, and not from his only but from thousands! But henceforth he would study the Chart which was said to be the guide to eternal life, and if happiness was to be gained by a knowledge of its contents, why should he not win it? He wanted to be happy as much as any one, therefore he would no longer neglect the means to attain it. Occupied with these reflections the time passed imperceptibly, and Willie rushed into the parlour to summon him to dinner before he was aware that the farmer and his wife had returned. Of course the farmer had to carve, and Willie had summoned George that he might see how well his father did it, and of course George gave praise unstintingly. Then the evening was spent with their friends, and George saw the mistletoe bough pendant from the rafters of the large hall, which was another novelty to him; and before the evening was over the waits came in and sang the Christmas hymn. In that part of the country they always went to the farm-houses to sing, and give and receive felicitations for the season; the Priory-farm was the last in order, for there supper was provided for them, the family waiting upon them and plying them with good cheer.

George helped, and, as Willie said, did credit to the character of waiter, and won golden opinions from the household.



CHAPTER X.

THE VISIT PROLONGED.

BUT all pleasant things have an end, and George regretfully thought that in a day or two he must take his departure for the smoky town and dull lodgings, so on the morrow he announced his intention of leaving on the following day.

‘What is that you are saying?’ sharply queried the farmer.

‘That I must bring my pleasant visit to an end and leave you to-morrow.’

‘You say “pleasant,” but you cannot mean it, or you would not be in such haste to get away, Mr. Nicholson.’

‘Why, I have trespassed on your hospitality already an unconscionable time.’

‘Now, Mr. Nicholson—George—you are town and I am country, and townspeople may have a different way of putting things, perhaps a better; that I cannot say; but when I say a thing I mean it; and now I want you to understand that if you will stay with us until Willie goes back you will be heartily welcome. You have nothing to do at home, and if you want employment, why, give Willie some lessons.’

‘Thank you, father, but don’t you think George might go out shooting, for a change?’

‘That he could if he knows how to use a gun.’

‘George can shoot as well as the squire; why he shot for me—’ Willie came to an abrupt stop.

‘Shot what, Willie?’

‘Never mind, father, but he is a capital shot.’

‘Now, Willie, you overrate my abilities in that line as in all others; to hear you Mr. Jacques would suppose that I can really shoot, whereas I can do very little in that way.’

‘That is just like you, George; why, *to hear you* one would suppose you could do nothing but sit over the fire and wind yarn.’

‘But you will stay with us, Mr. Nicholson?’ asked Mrs. Jacques.

‘Thank you, Ma’am, but I am afraid I shall give you too much trouble.’

‘Not at all; we shall be only too glad to keep you.’

‘That we shall,’ responded the farmer; ‘indeed you have made this season so pleasant to me that I have not had the least desire to regret the past.’

‘George, you must stay to take care of me; how should I get to town alone?’

‘Very well, my lad, under Jipstone’s care.’

‘But I want you. Shall I call Bessie to help to persuade you?’

Mrs. Jacques looked at her boy in astonishment at his assurance, but Willie only laughed, and began to whistle as he rose from the table, saying, ‘I am going to the forest, will you go, George?’

George consented, but stayed a few minutes with the kind, hospitable pair to thank them; but they would not listen, declaring that they were the obliged party. Then George hastened after Willie with a severe reproof for his foolish speech.

‘Now, George, don’t scold as if I had said something very wicked.’

'You have said what is wrong; you ought never to bring in a young woman's name, you do not know what mischief you might make.'

'Well, George, I am sorry if I have done wrong, but, but—'

'But what?'

'Why—why—'

'What is the matter with you, Willie?'

'Nothing, only I thought that what I was going to say might be wrong.'

'You had better tell me.'

'Well, I was going to say I thought you liked Bessie; and she is such a good girl that I would not for anything say aught that was wrong about her.'

'That I am sure you would not, Willie, and the best thing for you will be, not to bring her name in; I am almost a stranger to her, and she might well be grieved if she had heard you this morning.'

'Well, George, I won't mention her again, not even if you ask me how she is when I hear from home,' laughed Willie.

'That will be well,' was the grave reply.

But Willie's suspicion was correct; George did admire Bessie Luke more than any woman he had previously seen, and he thought if she were as good as she seemed, the man would be happy who could win her for his wife; but he was annoyed that Willie had noticed his partiality, and blamed himself severely for letting others see that he cared for her, when as yet he had said no word to her that could imply a serious preference. For he had an innate reverence for women, and did not like to hear the name of a modest girl lightly spoken. As George remained silent for a long time, Willie began to be uneasy, and said very gravely:

‘George, if I have vexed you I am very sorry. I did not mean anything, only fun.’

‘“Only,” Willie, when you want to make fun don’t bring in good girls.’



CHAPTER XI.

AFLOAT AGAIN.

‘Now, here is the forest, George,’ cried Willie, eagerly, anxious to turn the subject ; ‘I know a place where we can get plenty of fine moss. Come along.’

For their object in visiting the forest was to get moss for nests. George had told Willie that the forest moss would not be suitable for his Arctic eggs and fowl, but Willie declared it would please his mother, and in time he would have a place fitted up like an iceberg, with the nests arranged as he had seen them in Greenland ; but at the present all he wanted was to give pleasure to his mother. There was a closet in George’s bedroom which the two were making the receptacle of the curiosities Will had brought home. He had not yet showed them to his mother, intending to give her a surprise on the last day of his stay at home, thinking it would tend to divert her thoughts from his deparature. George entered into his wish, and assisted him, and also gave him some trifles that he had obtained from the Esquimaux ; so that when their arrangements were complete, the closet presented a very respectable collection of curious things. Willie was wild with delight, and danced about the room, quite forgetting that he should alarm his mother, until Mrs. Jacques knocked at the door and asked if anything had happened. Willie rushed to the closet, banged to the door, and hastily locked it ; while George opened the outer door to Mrs. Jacques, who stood pale and trembling.

'Nothing is wrong, Mrs. Jacques, only Willie was letting off a little steam before he leaves.'

'Then Willie is glad to go?'

'O no! I did not mean that.'

'O, mother, how could you think such a thing!' cried Willie, throwing his arms round her neck and kissing her cheek. 'You dear old mother! I wish you could go with me. No I don't, for you would be frozen to death; but I should like to have you always, and I will some day; but you must not think I am glad to get away; I was only glad at something George has done for me. Come and see. George, I may as well tell mother now.'

But George had left the room when Mrs. Jacques entered.

'Come, mother;,' and Willie threw open the closet door, and revealed the source of his excitement in sundry shelves of beautifully-arranged curiosities.

Mrs. Jacques was as surprised, pleased and full of admiration as even Willie could desire, and that is saying much. But everything was new to her. The pretty little Esquimaux slippers especially pleased her, they were so artistically worked; the large duck-like bird next attracted her attention, sitting just as though it were alive, only, as Willie observed, instead of being among snow and ice, it was seated on green moss in a nice warm closet, which he thought it would enjoy so much that it would never go back to its old quarters. Of course the farmer and Bessie Luke must be called to see, to admire, and to ask innumerable questions, which even Willie could not answer, so that they had to go down to George for further information.

Altogether, Willie's commencement of a museum was a great success, and gave an impetus to the further development

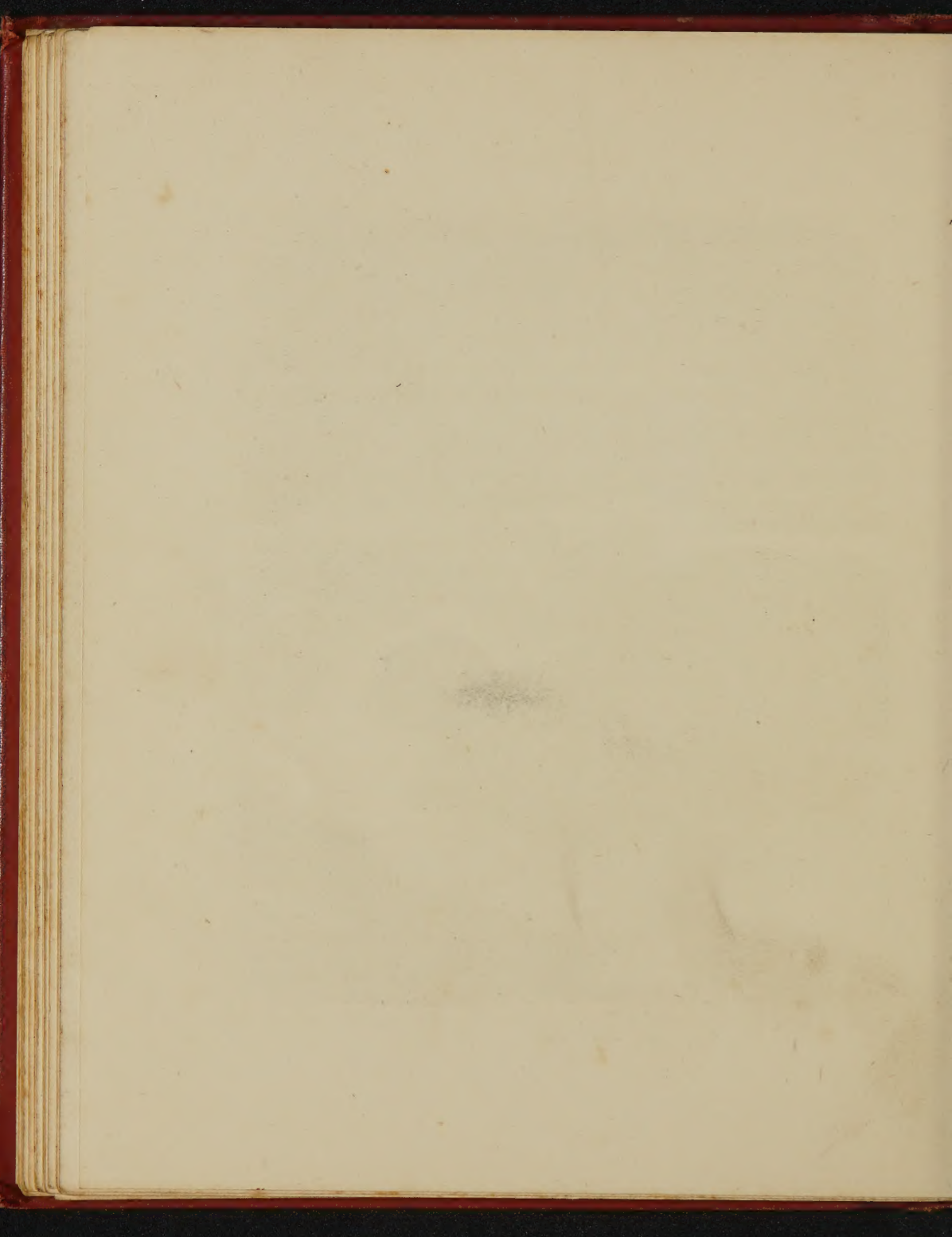
of his natural taste ; it also did what he had hoped,—diverted for a time the minds of his parents.

At last the happy holiday came to an end, the last walk taken, the last good-byes said ; but not before George had found an opportunity of asking pretty Bessie if she could consent to change her happy country life for a town residence and sailor husband ; and Bessie thought she could, for she believed that, as George's wife, she would be the happiest woman in England. Thus this visit was to George a most eventful one ; and as he took his seat on the coach-box, he could not but think what a different aspect his life bore from what it had done when he last sat there. Then he had scarcely realized that he was a responsible being, with hopes and aspirations which earth could not satisfy. He had been content, because he had not then known the power of true religion to sweeten trial and turn it into blessing. Now he was learning lessons from the 'Book of Life,' slowly but surely ; and he did know that his greatest desire was to be God's child, to have Christ say of him, 'He is My brother.' These thoughts led to the enquiry, 'What, if I am a child of God, must my life be?' There could be but one reply, 'God-like'—a word, how big with meaning ! which expressed every grace that could adorn frail humanity. Why, if men were God-like, what a world this would be ; every one animated by untiring love, seeking only to do good, and by his actions showing his kindred to his Almighty Father.

George's silence lasted the first stage, but it was unnoticed ; for Willie and the coachman had been talking so fast that they forgot everybody but themselves. Jipstone was wearing the warm fox-skin gloves that he had found in the brown-paper parcel thrust into his hand by Willie on the former



The Walrus.



journey. The cap he had in his pocket, as he assured Willie he could only wear it in the dark—a hat being the proper head-gear for a respectable coachman who had been on the road ever since he could drive four-in-hand. Then Willie had to relate his home adventures, which recalled his friend's proximity; and with shame he turned to George to apologize, but George would not allow him to make excuses, saying, what in his case was quite true, 'that his thoughts had been good company.'

Captain Winter smiled to see his young apprentice return so cheerful, and praised him for being back to time, without writing for extension of leave, which so many did. Then he complimented George on his hearty looks; said the country had agreed with him, and hoped he had seen green fields, as he had never seen *Green-land*, often as he had gone to the country, which Willie called a very 'wintry joke.'

However, business began in earnest; and in due time Willie was again on the broad ocean, trying to do his duty to both God and man in a hearty, healthful, loving spirit. His love to God was a real principle; not taken up with the Bible and put away when he had finished reading,—but pervading his whole life, influencing his every action. Yet Willie was not without his temptations, both from within and from without. He heard bad language, he saw many things opposed to the purity of the Gospel, he had strong passions, and often had to check his hasty temper. But his 'I'll try' to master myself was crowned with success, because he tried in dependence upon God; he fled to the Strong for strength.

What wonder, then, that he improved his knowledge and gained the approbation of his captain. This voyage was a success, as had been his first. Indeed it was said that the 'Bonnie Sarah' had always returned full, and that both

owners and captain were getting rich from the proceeds of her valuable cargoes.

Willie had added to his stock of curiosities several birds and Esquimaux implements, and a coat, cap, and trousers of seal-skin; but he valued most the ivory horn or tusk of a walrus that Captain Winter had given him. All these his friend George had carefully packed ready to be taken home, to give pleasure to those as dearly loved as loving.



CHAPTER XII.

THE WEDDING.

THIS time George did not go home with Willie, but was to follow in a few days. Why, Willie did not know until his arrival at home, when he found that his friend and Bessie Luke were to be married as soon as George came down; that George had furnished a house ready for his wife; that her friends were delighted with the match; and lastly, that his mother had engaged another maid. For a moment Willie was angry that George had not told him; but this feeling did not last. He recalled George's remarks, and ceased to feel annoyed. Then he was made glad by his mother telling him that she had arranged with Bessie for him to lodge with her and George during his stay in town.

In due time, George came down. Mr. Jacques gave the wedding breakfast, and Willie was the best man. The newly-married pair were to spend a week at the neighbouring city, and then go to their own home, where Willie would join them at the expiration of his holiday.

That home George had determined to dedicate to God—'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,' was his resolve; and Bessie was like-minded. Had she not been, much as he loved her, George would not have married her. But during his long visit he had seen that her neatness, quickness and intelligence were not her highest qualities, but that her actions were the result of principles implanted and

regulated by the Word of God. She served a Master in heaven in all her earthly services, and George believed that in her he had found the wife which the wise king declared to be 'a crown to her husband.' From an union thus formed happiness might be expected ; and, we may add, that the expectation was fulfilled.



CHAPTER XIII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

WILLIE had been four years at sea. He had learned his duties thoroughly, knew every rope and spar, could strike a whale, when allowed to try, with scientific precision, had studied navigation, and bade fair to become a master at no distant date. At the termination of this, Willie's fourth voyage, Jack's apprenticeship would end. He had never ceased to be jealous of Willie, but had refrained from showing his dislike, as he had done at first. The 'Bonnie Sarah' was again full, and they were about to leave the country. One day the men went for an expedition on the ice. Willie did not go with the larger party, he and one or two others wanted a fox, and they took a different direction. They had not proceeded far when they saw three bear's cubs playing on the ice. Willie thought of Jipstone, and shot one of the cubs. He caught it up, and ran off towards his ship, for the report of the gun had alarmed the mother, who came bounding over the ice. She saw Willie with her young one in his arms, glanced at him a moment as though she were calculating the distance between him and the ship, then caught up a young cub in her teeth, and rushing to an open space, threw it into the sea, fetched the other and treated it in like manner: this was the work of a minute—then she bounded towards Willie. Jack saw her, and knew that Willie could not escape, for his gun was not charged; yet he

took no step forward, raised not his gun, but waited to see the result.

Willie had reached the ship's side, thrown the dead cub on the deck, and was climbing up when the bear reached him. Another instant, and he would have been torn down, but at that moment, when Willie could feel the breath of the enraged bear, a ball pierced her head and she rolled over on the ice.

Who had saved him? Not Jack, for he was creeping out of sight; no, he owed his life to his friend. George had set out with the larger party, but from one of those sudden, unaccountable impulses which sometimes move the mind without any apparent reason, he had turned back, and came in sight just in time to save the youth from a horrible death. He had also seen Jack, but he thought it well not to mention that circumstance. Jack was about to leave them, he was not clever, never would be anything more than a man before the mast; he would say nothing to prejudice others against him, to make life worse for him.

When George came up, a strange, unwonted moisture dimmed his usually brilliant dark eyes.

'Willie, boy, are you hurt?'

'No, thanks to you, old fellow, or now I should be a meal for that huge monster, or perhaps thrown into the water, as she treated her cubs.'

'Don't talk of it, Willie, it makes me shiver.'

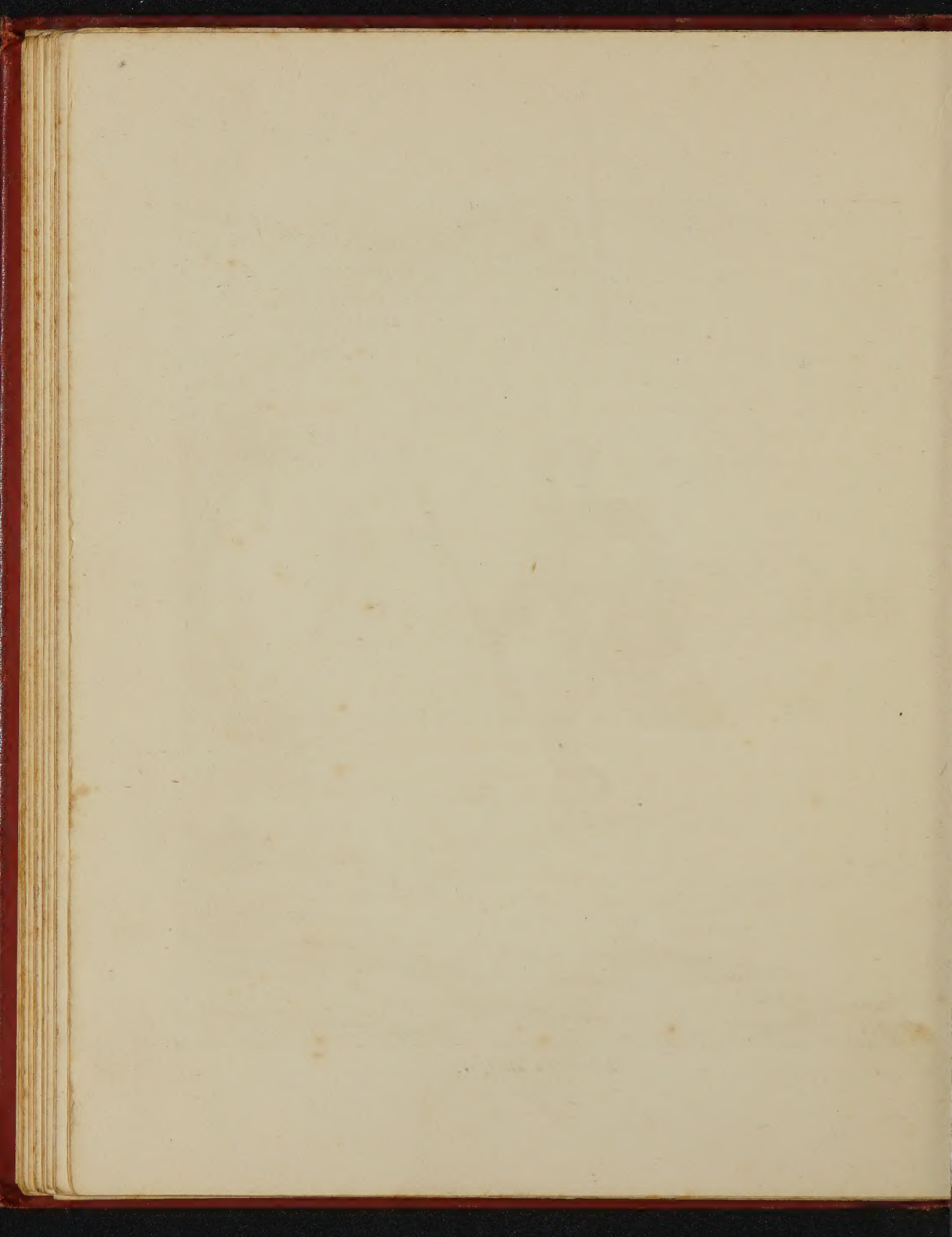
Captain Winter came up, and was told by Willie how George had saved him from the bear.

'You are a brave fellow, George, and a capital shot, or you could not have killed the creature from that distance; you must have her skin as your trophy of merit.'

'Thanks, Captain, that would be too much, you must have that.'



A Narrow Escape.



‘Not I ! I am not so fond of bears ; no, you must take it, to remind you of this day’s work, for I believe you are the only one likely to forget it ; Willie will not, neither shall I.’

George took the skin for a rug, and the skin of the head he made into a cap the fac-simile of a bear’s head, with the ears upright and the eyes open, and lined it with oil-silk. When completed, he put it on and went to Willie, when he knew that he should find him alone. Hearing a peculiar noise, Willie looked up and saw a bear’s head nodding at him in the crevice of the doorway ; he jumped up, exclaiming, ‘George !’

‘So you are not afraid of bear the second, Willie ?’

‘No ! because I knew no bear would come down here.’

‘How do you like my new-fashioned cap ?’

‘Very much, it is so uncommon.’

‘Do you think it will satisfy Jipstone’s taste ?’

‘Yes, he would be delighted with it ; but, George, it is yours and you must wear it.’

‘What ! to frighten all the good folks who may chance to see me ; no, I made it for you to give to Jipstone, if you will ; anyhow it is yours ; there,’ tossing the cap on to Willie’s head, for which it was much too large, so it covered his face. He only needed the skin to make him a veritable bear, George declared, laughing.

Disencumbering himself, Willie thanked his friend for remembering his wish, as well as for the present itself. The cap was beautifully made and would have done credit to a professed furrier.

CHAPTER XIV.

‘A MAN OVERBOARD.’

As the ‘Bonnie Sarah’ neared the Orkneys she encountered rough weather, and one morning, just as it began to be light, arose the cry, ‘A man overboard!’ Willie was on deck, and to jump after the man was the work of a second. The sea was rough, but he could swim well, and had a brave heart, and tried to reach the man whose head he had just seen at a distance. He succeeded in seizing him by the hair as he was sinking a third time, and kept his head above water until the boat, which was now lowered, reached them, and friendly hands rescued them from their perilous position. Willie changed his garments and was no worse for his adventure. Not so the other ; it was some time before the doctor could restore him to consciousness. It was happy for him that a medical man was on board, which was not always the case. But this gentleman wished to make a northern voyage, and his uncle being an old friend of Captain Winter, the nephew was engaged as medical officer. Had it not been for his exertions, the man would not have recovered. How he had fallen into the sea was not exactly known, but it was well known that Willie’s promptitude and the doctor’s skill saved him. And the man knew that also, when he became well enough to hear how he had been rescued from a watery grave.

Some curiosity was evinced to see how the man would act, for all knew that he had no kindly feeling for Willie.

Could they have looked into his heart, they would have seen a curious mixture of pride, repentance and shame, for the rescued man was Jack. Pride forbade him to own himself in the wrong; repentance said, 'Own your fault and amend;' shame said, 'How can I when I have done such injuries?' He felt quite relieved when he made his first appearance on deck to find that Willie was not there. His self-gratulation did not last long. Willie saw him, and came up to congratulate him on his recovery. Jack muttered some indistinct thanks, and turned to the side of the vessel and leaned over as if to watch the fish.

Willie was rather disappointed; he did not want thanks, he would rather be without them; but he did wish for a better feeling to exist, and hoped that Jack's narrow escape from death would have taught him charity.

Willie was on watch and walking the deck between eleven and twelve that night, when some one came up to him. At first he did not see who it was, but soon found that it was Jack.

'Jack, you here? It is not your watch; besides, it is not time to relieve yet.'

'I know that, Willie; indeed, that is the reason I came now. I want to ask you a question, Willie.'

'With all my heart. Ask away.'

'Why did you save me?'

'Why! why, how could I have let you go down without a try to keep you up? You cannot swim, although you ought to learn.'

Jack turned away, walked a few paces, then rejoined Willie.

'I say, Willie, I cannot understand you risking your life for mine, when, without any risk, I would not save you from the bear!'

'Jack, how can you think that I should remember that when you were in danger?'

'It would have been natural.'

'I don't know; I think not. It seems to me more natural to help a fellow in distress, than to run away.'

Jack again walked away, but, as before, came back.

'Willie, can you look over the past and let us be friends?'

'Why, Jack, the past never troubles me, and I shall be very glad to be friends with you; it is what I have wanted ever since we sailed together.'

'You don't mean that, Willie?'

'Indeed I do, Jack. I never was angry with you.'

'But I gave you plenty of reason to be vexed with me.'

'Well, if you did, you see it was of no use; for I always said to myself, I'll try to be just to Jack, and not to worry about trifles.'

'Willie, did that come of reading "the Book" ?'

'I think it did, Jack.'

'Willie!' and Jack's voice was scarcely above a whisper, 'Willie, I thought a great deal when I was in bed, more than ever I did in all my life before, and I should like to know more of that "Book." Will you tell me?'

Willie was silent,—silent with a thankful awe that filled his heart with joy. How good God was to him! he had barely done his duty.

Jack said, 'Willie, you don't believe me!'

'Indeed I do, Jack, and you shall have "the Book" to read whenever you like. Here it is, take it with you; you can give it me to-morrow.'

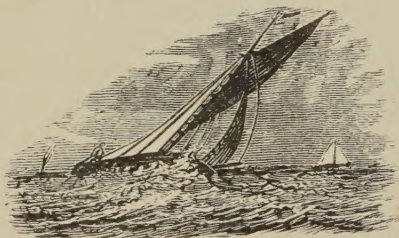
Jack took 'the Book;' and this time shaking Willie's hand, he went below.

Willie continued his walk to and fro, so happy that he

forgot the time, and kept the watch for another as well as his own, and did not discover his mistake until that one came on deck half-dressed, and muttering excuses about having overslept himself.

'Never mind, old fellow; you will take my watch some night, then we shall be even.'

'I never saw such a fellow as you are, Willie, to make excuses for one.'



CHAPTER XV.

IN APPRENTICE NO LONGER.

BUT even when Willie did turn in, he could not sleep for thinking of Jack, and he earnestly asked God to make him a true Christian ; 'then he will be so much happier,' Willie said, aloud.

Poor Jack had never been really happy, a spirit of discontent and envy had been his bane ; he disliked to see others favoured, yet made no effort to win friends, but rather the reverse ; for as we have seen with respect to Willie, who would gladly have been on good terms with him, he repulsed every overture, and sneered at Willie's forbearance as mean-spirited ; coward he could not call him, for every one on board knew that he had a spirit that never quailed at danger. Now he could not even call him mean-spirited, for had he not saved his life at the imminent risk of his own, and that after every provocation received that envy and jealousy could suggest or inflict ?

No ! Jack now tried to do justice to Willie ; he could not yet understand him, probably never would, but he could amend his own ways, and he would do that ; so he said, and the assertion was not mere words. He had really seen himself in a light that shocked even his dull sensibilities, and he had felt that he was then totally unprepared to appear in the presence of his Judge, and an earnest desire was begotten in

his mind for a knowledge of the contents of that 'Book' which Willie so often read, and which he called his life-chart. Having that, perhaps he too might lead a better and wiser life than heretofore. And to make a beginning he would thank Willie for saving him. He was awkward about it, but he did it; and then returned to his hammock well pleased that he had done one right thing. How he wished now that his apprenticeship was not over! but that was useless; in a few weeks he would be free to go where he chose.

'Why should I not ask Captain Winter to take me next year?' he asked himself. 'I will, so that is settled.' And much to Captain Winter's astonishment he did ask. Captain Winter had marked the difference in his general conduct since the accident; yet he was not aware of the great change it had been the means of effecting in Jack's thoughts. However, he was pleased when Jack requested to be allowed to sail with him the following year, and made him a conditional promise, which Jack made plea for refusing another and more profitable offer. In fact he was now as anxious to be where Willie would be, as he had formerly been to shun him; and when the winter had passed he presented himself before the Captain to claim the fulfilment of his promise.

'Well, Jack, so you wish to go again in the old ship?'

'Yes, Captain; I like her best.'

'Why, Jack, you have not tried any other.'

'No! nor I don't want, if you will take me.'

'You are just in time, there is only one vacancy, all the old hands go but Simmons; he, you know, is now master of the "Truenot"'

'Yes, Sir, I heard ; and I am glad ; he was a good officer, and will make a good captain.'

'No doubt. I do not know what I could have done (Bruce is not the man to succeed him), if Willie were not so up in navigation ; but he will be a help, and so we shall get on somehow.'

'Ay, ay, Captain ; with you to command we are sure to get on.'

The Captain laughed at Jack's enthusiasm, and telling him to sign articles and do his duty, walked away ; for he saw that Jack was wanting to have a word with Willie, who was on deck.

'Willie, how are you ?'

'Quite well, Jack, and ready for another brush with the bears.'

'Willie ! I am going with you.'

'That's right, Jack, stick to the old craft ; she has been a good mother, and I should not like to leave her.'

'You are not loose yet, Willie.'

'No, not for two more voyages ; but even then I shall hope to stay by her.'

'O ! you will be made mate.'

'Nonsense, Jack ! I shall be too young.'

'Time will tell, Willie. Where is George ?'

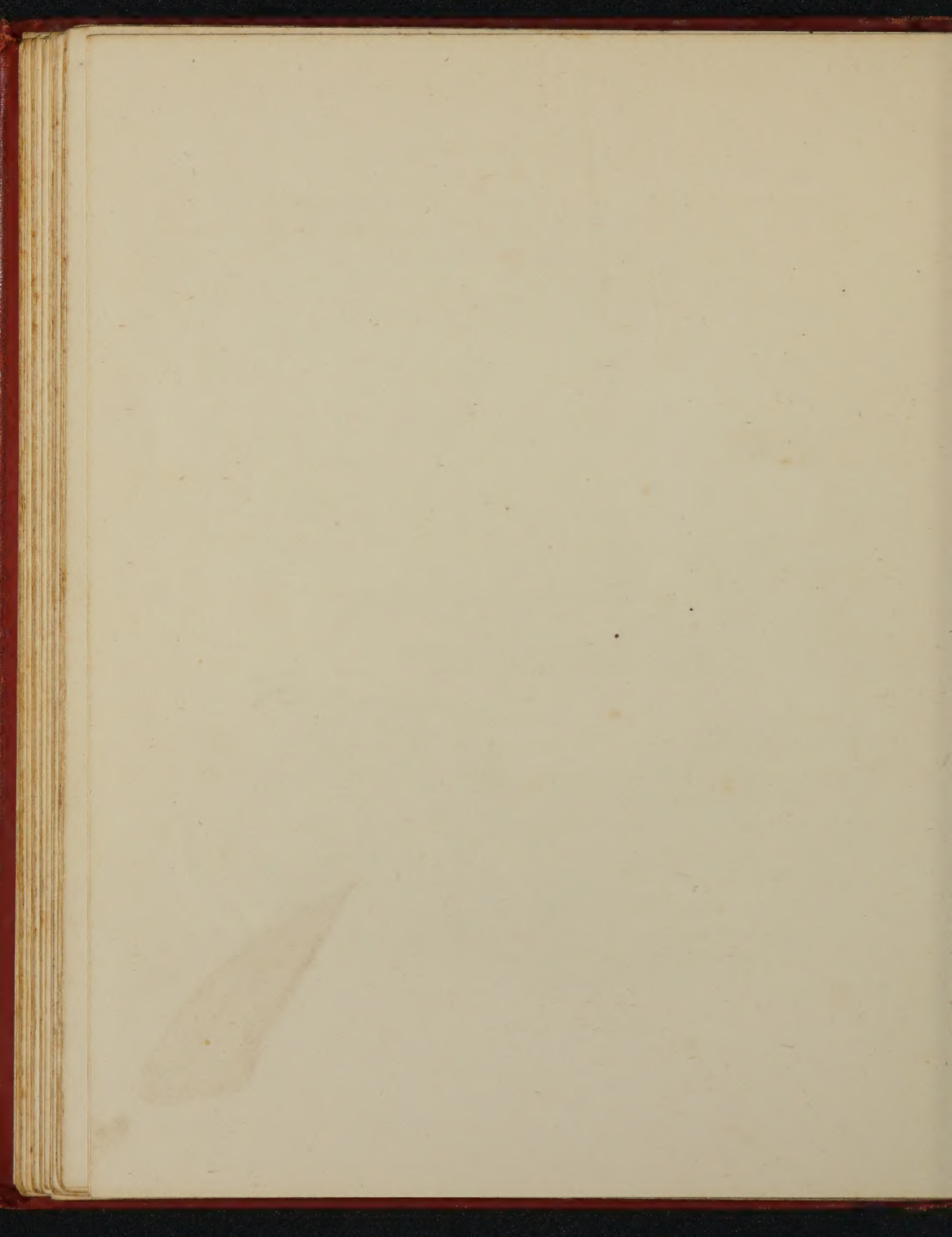
'You will find him below ; he is always busy there, making matters square.'

'Ay, George knows what is what as well as any man.'

Jack disappeared below, and Willie began to hum a home tune as a little outburst of wonder, thanks and pleasure. He was glad that Jack should have sought a berth on the old ship, because he thought it a proof that Jack was really in



Harpooning a Whale.



earnest when he had said that he intended to lead a new life, and he silently thanked the Giver of all good gifts for the change wrought, and trusted that it would be permanent.

This voyage Willie struck two whales, to his own great delight and the admiration of George, who was very proud of his pupil, and prophesied that, if Willie would, he might be a first-class harpooner.

Willie's cheek flushed with joy at such unqualified commendation from so good a judge as George; but most of all was he pleased because of his parents, who were so proud of him and believed in him so entirely. Then it was another step gained in his upward course. Next year he should have served his time, and if he maintained his character for ability and trustworthiness, why, he might reasonably hope for promotion.

But there was one drawback to his satisfaction. Captain Winter had declared that this would be his last Arctic voyage, his health had given way and he must resign command of his vessel. He did so with regret; but as he truly said he could not walk the deck unless he were able to do the duty expected of him. So during Willie's last voyage as apprentice, Bruce was captain, and depended on Willie for help more than on the mate for the time; and he was really grateful to Willie for his valuable services, and requested of the owners, as a personal favour, that Willie might sail with him as mate. Thus by an unexpected change of circumstances Willie's wild supposition, ere he had been to sea, was accomplished. He was mate when only twenty-two. Young, yet thoroughly competent, because he had neglected no means or opportunity of qualifying himself for the duties that might devolve upon him.

And now Willie hoped very soon to persuade his dear parents to leave the country and reside near the town, that he might be with them as much as possible. They could barely live on the little farm attached to Pond Cottage ; and during the seven years that had elapsed since Willie vowed to himself to re-purchase Newton Grange, he had seen his parents grow old and unfit to work ; and as he was no farmer, and never could be one, he changed his plans, and now his ambition was to get a nice house near the town, with a good flower-garden to please his mother, and a large kitchen-garden and orchard where his father might employ himself when he chose to work. He had seen a place that would suit exactly ; it was about two miles from the town, pretty and cottage-like in appearance, and only one small cottage was near it. The latter was occupied by George Nicholson and his wife, for whose sake he had taken it, that she might have a taste of country air. They had no family, and Willie was sure that Bessie Nicholson would be the best of neighbours for his mother. But how should he persuade them to leave the country ? His heart almost failed when he thought how difficult he should find it. Well, he would wait until this voyage was ended ; he would take the house, put it into Mrs. Nicholson's hands to have it made habitable against his return, and then he would try in earnest.

Mrs. Nicholson promised to use her best endeavours to make the house as pleasing and comfortable as possible ; and as she had good taste and sound judgment, Willie did not fear leaving the arrangements in her hand. The gardens were also to be put in order, so that all might be in readiness for Mr. and Mrs. Jacques whenever they could be induced to go to it. As Willie planned and arranged with his friend George, he little imagined that before the voyage was con-

cluded, circumstances would have happened that would be more powerful arguments than all his persuasions to induce the now aged couple gladly to remove to the town they had so disliked ; that they might be with their boy as often and as long as his seafaring life would permit.



CHAPTER XVI.

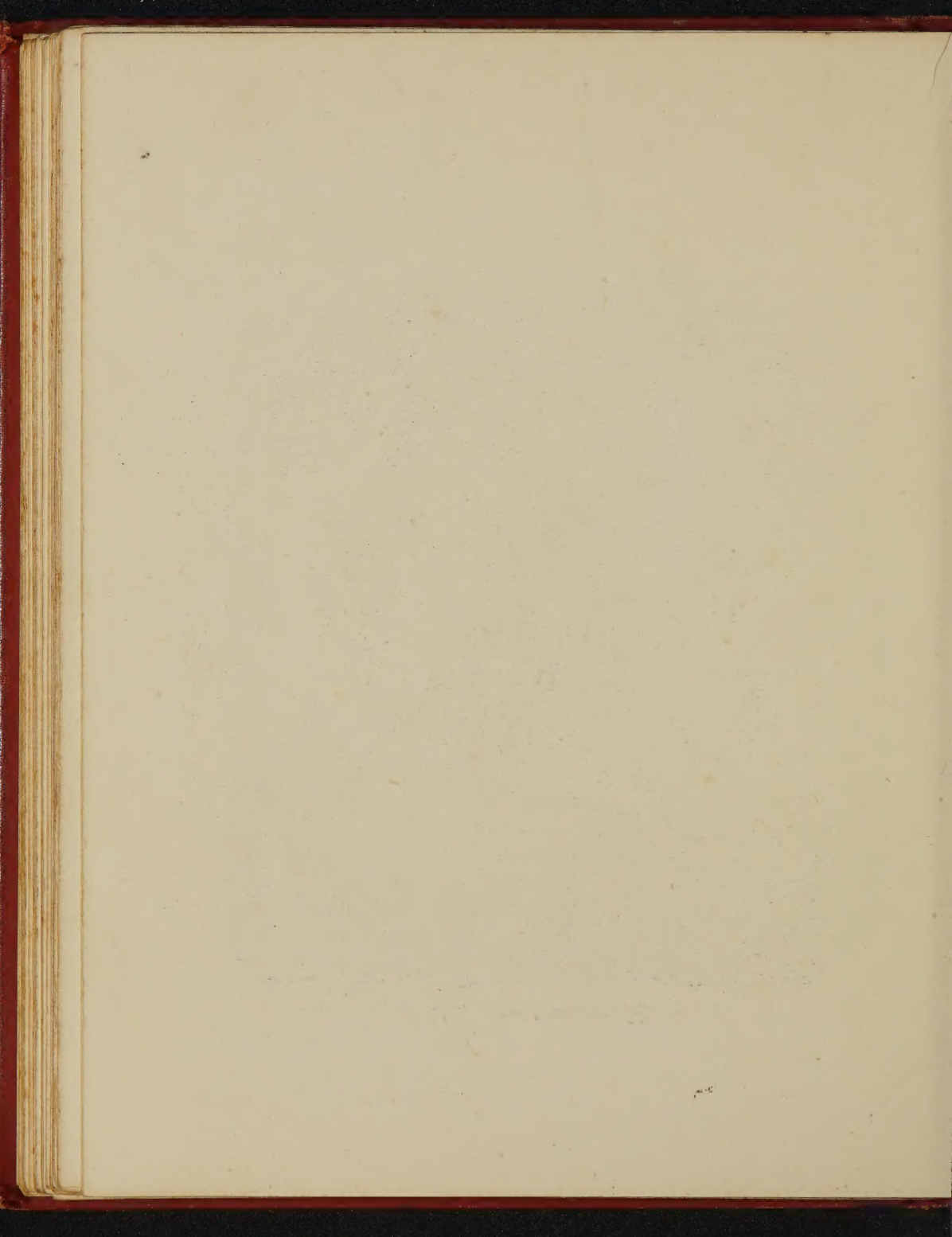
A SEVERE WINTER.

THE 'Bonnie Sarah' had been always fortunate, so that her crew never anticipated anything but success. However, this year was to prove an exception to the general rule. On the outward voyage contrary winds prevailed, and they also encountered several severe storms, so that they were late in reaching their station. Then the whales were shy; never during the twelve years that he had sailed in the 'Bonnie Sarah,' had George Nicholson seen so few. He laughingly said, 'They used to come to welcome Captain Winter, but as he was no longer with them, they did not think it worth their while to pay their respects to a new master.' The ship could not be filled in the usual time, and was obliged to remain in the Arctic seas beyond the proper season. George and Willie anxiously watched the weather, and both hinted to Captain Bruce that it would be dangerous to delay moving the ship. But he would not heed their warnings until the ice began to close round them, then he gave orders to make sail.

A very little way was the vessel able to proceed, then it was stopped by large floes of ice, and soon entirely surrounded. Daily had the sailors to cut the ice round the ship, lest she should be crushed by its force. Too late now, Captain Bruce lamented his obstinacy. A long winter lay before them, and they possessed an insufficient stock of provisions. He took



The Ice closing in.



counsel with George and Willie as to what would be the best to do under the circumstances, and both advised him to speak candidly to the men, tell them the amount of sustenance on board, and recommend an immediate adoption of short allowance, so that their stores might last out the winter. Captain Bruce was not popular with his men, but they were reasonable, and almost without a murmur agreed to his suggestions. Perhaps they would have blamed him, had not George talked to them, and been at some trouble to point out to them, that unless they were willing to sacrifice present comfort, they must eventually perish through want; for they could not calculate upon finding edible fish in any great abundance. Then Willie's cheerful, hopeful face encouraged the men in their duty to their captain. The winter was unusually severe, and what the men of the 'Bonnie Sarah' endured is not to be told in words. Yet they were mercifully preserved from sickness and death, with only one exception. Captain Bruce had a much-loved wife and young family, and his thoughts were ever turned to them; of his own sufferings he made light. Then he accused himself as the cause of the ship's detention: had he listened to his two best friends, they might have been at home and in comfort. These sad self-accusations preyed on his mind, and he became seriously ill. Willie was a faithful attendant as well as a watchful guardian of the master's interests. The winter passed, and spring came with its warmth and refreshment. The ice-bound vessel was able to be moved, and to make for the open sea. What a season of rejoicing it was to those gaunt, worn figures on board of the frail protection between them and a miserable death, the vessel as weather-beaten as themselves, scarcely seaworthy, yet still their only chance of safety!

On finally leaving the ice behind, the cheers of the half-

starved crew were loud and continuous, the spontaneous outburst of hearts penetrated with the deepest thankfulness to Divine Providence that had so wonderfully preserved them through the perils of the past few months, and brought them out of their icy prison-house in comparative health and safety. And for the time, not one on board but gave his tribute of thanksgiving heartily and sincerely. Poor Jack was slow to express in words his gratitude to the Giver of all good, but his heart was truly sincere in acknowledging the great and unmerited mercies received, and he said, 'I must live so as to show that I am thankful to God for sparing my life.'

Once more in the open sea and homeward-bound, Captain Bruce rallied, and his men hoped soon to see him again on deck ; for they were not deficient in sympathy ; their sufferings had drawn them closer together in kindly feeling, because they had borne their severe trials patiently, ay, and hopefully. Much was owing to the unwavering example of George Nicholson and Willie, both of whom not only evinced the characteristics of thorough seamen, but of sincere Christians, and to them was in a great measure due the excellent discipline maintained throughout that dreary winter.

On nearing the Orkneys, Captain Bruce grew worse : he said to George and Willie, 'I shall not again see port ; but you will take my body home for my poor wife to see put into the ground ?' Receiving their promise to that effect, he gave them a few last messages for home, then turned his attention to the other home to which he was hastening, and whence he would not return. He was a man of few words, and shy to talk ; but he told George that he thanked God for his long sickness, for it had made him search for an anchoring-place, and he had found Christ, and believed that for His sake God had pardoned all his sins, and would receive him into the everlasting mansions. George trusted to the increased comforts

they had got to keep the captain in life, if not to restore him to health, so that he might see his family once more. He did not seem to grow worse, and when they reached Leith, George said to him,—

‘Captain, we are very near home, you will soon see your wife.’

The captain fixed his eyes on George as he responded :

‘Never more in this world, George, my good friend ; but I have now ceased to regret that or anything else ; Christ is my peace, and soon I shall be with Him. You will tell my wife I died trusting in Him ?’

A few more hours, and Captain Bruce slept in Jesus.

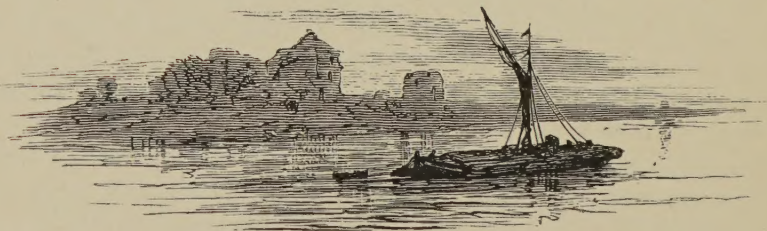
The men at once waited on Willie to tender their willing obedience to his orders, but Willie strongly urged George’s claims to be put in command. Nicholson was much his senior, had sailed in the vessel longer, and had every right to the trust. The men looked at Nicholson, to hear what he would say to Willie’s proposition. George coughed, then spoke in a clear, loud voice :

‘Well, men, as you are waiting I won’t keep you long in suspense. It is quite true what my young friend has said, I am much his elder in years, and I have sailed in this here ship longer by five or six years, but I don’t count that as a reason why I should take the command from the second officer, and one so well able to take us safe into port as—I will give him his title—Captain Jacques is ; no, men, I have been harpooner on board this ship many years, and, with the exception of this year, always been successful as such, and harpooner I wish to remain ; I don’t want to be master.’

A murmur of applause burst from the men, and one and all there tendered their allegiance to Captain Jacques. Willie felt too deeply his responsibility to be elated, and saying a

few words of thanks for the confidence placed in him, and shaking the men by the hand, he went below for a few moments, that he might unseen unburden His heart to Him Who by a wonderful chain of events had raised him to a position in which he could help his parents without their feeling that they would be a burden upon their affectionate son.

Speedily and safely they now entered port, rejoicing to be at home ; but sad when they thought of the untimely fate of the late master, and the sorrow of the bereaved wife and orphans, who were but poorly provided for. Willie did not forget the widow, and when the owners not only approved of the men's decision, but confirmed it, and paid Willie the extra salary, he gave the extra amount to the widow of Captain Bruce in a way so delicate that she could not refuse to accept it ; and it may be here stated that during all the after years he sailed as master, he allowed her a stated income to aid her in bringing up her children.



CHAPTER XVII.

THE END.

How joyfully Willie set out for the farm need not be told. The day of his return was fine and warm, and all nature seemed to have put on its best dress to welcome him. Jipstone drove ; he had not done so the last time that Willie visited his parents, and Willie had now an opportunity of presenting his bear-skin head-gear, that he had left packed up under the care of Mrs. Nicholson. Of course the farmer was at the place where the coach stopped, ready to welcome his boy as one restored from the dead.

‘Willie!’ ‘Father!’ and their hands were locked in a firm pressure, that spoke more than words the deep love that filled both their hearts.

Mrs. Jacques was standing at the door, waiting, and as soon as the light cart drove up, Willie jumped out, and had his arms round her ere she had yet seen his loved face.

‘Mother, did you give me up?’

‘No, Willie, I had given you to God years ago, and I never took you out of His hand, and all the time you have been away I was sure that you were under His Almighty care, and that He would keep you in safety.’

‘Right, mother ; He and He only kept me, and brought me back to you.’

They entered the house, and again the farmer took his son’s

hand, as if even now he could scarcely believe in the reality of his presence.

'Father, I have something to tell you.'

'Well, my boy, what is it?'

'You remember the charge you gave me before I went to sea?'

'Well?'

'You would not let me make a promise to you; but, father, I made one to myself, and by God's help I have kept it: father, I have yet to learn to smoke, drink or swear.'

The farmer turned away, he could not reply, his heart was too full for words. And he? ah! he had not deserved this crowning mercy; he who had murmured at the dispensations of Providence so often; he, who had been weak in faith, doubtful and desponding, when he ought to have been firm and trusting. But God had dealt mercifully with him, been better to him than his boding fears; not only had He brought back his son in health of body, but in purity of mind; a son to be thankful for; a man of rectitude in whom was the fear of God.

While these thoughts were occupying the father's mind, Willie had lovingly put his arm round his mother's neck as in the olden time when he was a boy.

'Mother, I have also a word for you: I have read a verse daily in your little "Daily Bread," and have found it food; you did well to put it up.' Then the three sat down to discuss the tea prepared for the traveller. When they were more settled and had time to realize that they were once again united, Willie proposed to his parents to give up the little farm and go with him to the town to the cottage he had prepared for them. He had not much trouble in persuading them; the trial of the past year had shown them that their

son was more to them than a home in the country. So it was arranged that the farm should be vacated at Michaelmas ; the farmer knew one who would be glad to take the farm and farming-stock at a fair valuation, and thus they would spend the winter together.

Captain Willie returned to the town to have everything perfectly ready for the reception of his parents, in which he was ably assisted by his friends the Nicholsons. He had also brought up from the country the curiosities that had been sources of both pleasure and comfort to his mother during his absences. A room in the cottage was set apart for a museum, and in it Willie and George, as of yore, arranged the Arctic productions. Willie had another tusk of a walrus, longer and thicker than the former one, an Arctic fox, several birds, nests and eggs ; also a deer-skin jacket, trousers, etc., as well as numerous Esquimaux productions, so that his collection was really a treasure to his parents, to be viewed by them and shown to their friends with pride, especially by Mrs. Jacques, whose face would glow when she said, ' My son brought these for me.'

Then Willie went once again to Pond Cottage to fetch his parents and the maid, who would not leave her mistress, and duly install them in their future home. The Nicholsons were ready to receive them, so that old faces, not new ones, gave the first greeting, and both Mr. and Mrs. Jacques felt as though they were among friends, not in a strange place ; and before the time came for their son to leave them, they had become quite reconciled to their change of residence. George Nicholson sailed as heretofore in the vessel he called his home, and Jack applied for a berth with his old friend : Captain Jacques did not refuse his request, but gave him a better position than he had dared to hope for.

Captain Jacques was prosperous in this his first voyage as master. For twelve successive years he had great success. The last of these was the same year that Captain Ross was rescued from his perilous position in the Arctic seas. And none rejoiced more than did Willie at the safety of the noble captain, and he received from Captain Ross a piece of tobacco, a biscuit, and some preserved meat, which had once formed part of the stores of the ill-fated 'Fury.' These valued relics were added to the cottage museum.

A lucrative position was at this time offered to Willie in connection with the Greenland trade, which, after mature thought, he accepted. He loved the sea, but his parents were growing old and infirm, and to be constantly with them, able to tend them, see that they wanted for nothing that love could supply, was a strong inducement to settle on shore, which he did, to the great joy of the old couple.

Thus we see what came of Willie's 'I'll Try.' He tried to do his duty in the fear of God. He was not ashamed to say 'No' when occasion required. He was not afraid to confess Christ. He was not self-seeking. He gave abundantly of that which he received; gave with a free, generous spirit, as one who counted himself but as a steward to dispense the trust committed to his care; and he reaped his reward in the love and esteem of all who knew him.

George Nicholson also gave up going to sea, and for many years held a responsible position in one of the dock offices. Jack continued his seafaring life, and was known among his messmates by the appellation, 'Bible-reading Jack.'



